

JESUS



J E S U S :

TOLD BY
THE WANDERING JEW

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Published by E. P. DUTTON & CO., INC.

TRANSLATED BY PHYLLIS MÉGROZ

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By
EDMOND FLEG



NEW YORK
E. P. DUTTON & CO., INC.

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FIRST EDITION

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
BY THE POLYGRAPHIC COMPANY OF AMERICA, N.Y.

TO MADELEINE

But for whom this book would
not have been written.

Her Husband

E. F.

CHAPTER I

The little Franciscan had shown me, to the right of the door, the rock where James, John, and Peter had slept, then, a little farther on, the spot near a broken column where Christ had received the kiss of Judas. Now I was alone on the Mount of Olives.

I remembered the wonder and despair I had felt when, as a child, I read the Gospels for the first time ; I remembered the questions that had sprung up in my mind, questions that had grown more and more urgent with the passing of the years. What did Jesus mean, what does Jesus still mean to Israel ? What is the secret that divides them, yet links them together ? If the Nazarene came to fulfil the Jewish belief, why did the Jews reject him ? If he came to destroy it why have they survived him ?

I knew all the works devoted to the study of his life, from Père Bouhours to Père de Grandmaison, from David Strauss to Paul-Louis Couchoud, from Joseph Salvador to Claude Montefiore, Joseph Klausner and Robert Eisler, regardless of whether they exalted or denied him, or whether they reconstructed him from theories. So, with my mind a chaos of conflicting ideas, I had come to seek the Master in the country of his sorrows. But in the highways of Galilee and Judæa, at the gates of Jerusalem, by the Wailing Wall that weeps for the fallen Temple, he had receded still further from me with each successive day.

Now, beneath the full moon, I was once again in the Garden of Gethsemane where he had lain face downward on the ground, praying in agony. In a last attempt to bring him back to life, I murmured, clothing my thoughts with words :

“ This is where he groaned and sweated blood. This is where he knew fear.”

From behind me came a voice :

No, not here, my dear sir. You are wrong.

Another shadow lay across the shadows of the olive-trees at my feet. Another shadow was silhouetted against the moon :

They are all wrong ! Thus is history written ! But are you here to learn the truth ? Tell me, yes or no ? Yes ? Then follow me, young man !

Before I could glimpse a face, the dark shape had begun to walk, and there was something so compelling in his movement that I rose and followed him.

Who had sent me this guide ? What was he about to reveal to me ?

He went through an iron gate, and out into the road. He turned to the right towards the Church of the Ascension, and down the steps that lead to the outer sanctuary.

The Franciscan has already shown you the cave, of course ? For one piastre—everyone must live ! . . . But I have the key ; come with me, and I'll show you over for nothing !

He spoke in perfect French with no trace of a foreign accent, but I could not place the lilt in his voice. Was it Russian, Spanish, American, or German, or had it borrowed something from every nationality ?

At the end of the corridor, I groped uncertainly in the gloom. A hand took mine. More steps. The key grated in the lock. We had come to the cave. It seemed larger than when I had first visited it, though I could not tell why. This time, I could not distinguish the three altars, the stone seats, or the roof with its worn frescoes. I could only see a crack of light overhead, that faintly irradiated brows shading two eyes, a straight nose, and a mouth that curved dreamily above a dark beard.

There was an olive-press in the garden. . . . It was used only when autumn drew to a close. . . . The cave is just off the road. When he used to go from the Temple to Bethany, this was where he halted to be alone with his apostles. . . . On that night they wanted to lie in hiding here. . . . But Judas knew ! . . .

"But—but how do you know?" I stammered.

His voice had grown weary. He stepped into the shadows, and a shaft of moonlight divided us. Merged in the darkness, he went on :

And he knew ! . . . He had said : " One of you shall betray me ! " ¹ He was sorrowful. He was filled with the need to be alone and to pray. He would often go forth alone. But do you really believe that he went into the valley where there were flower-gardens, paths, and palings ? If you believe that, you do not know him ! No—when he went out to pray, he sought the heights.

Again, the hand drew me on. We passed close to the porch, and began to ascend the slope.

Bare, uncultivated earth ; rocks.

This was where the three slept.

Tall stems, a sea of blossoms, olive-trees, and the moon.

This was where he sweated blood . . . twice, he went down : the disciples were asleep. He must have thought momentarily of the four cups of wine they had emptied so short a time ago. I heard his entreaty : " Father, Father, let this cup pass from me ! " When he descended for the third time, he went into the cave, and cried : " Arise ! Let us be going : behold, he is at hand that does betray me ! " Some of them accompanied him. The chicken-hearted amongst them remained in hiding. But he went forward to meet those who were approaching by the bridge across the Kedron. . . .

We had regained the outer sanctuary. We climbed the steps, and came to the highway.

Do you see the bridge up there ? It used to be far smaller. Picture the flickering torches moving forward, the glitter of swords and helmets, the creatures of the High

¹ At the end of this volume is a compendium of quotations from Biblical, traditional, and other sources which have been referred to, or introduced into the narrative. For the attitude of the Wandering Jew himself towards such data, see pp. 153-156.

Priest—about whom derisive songs were sung—armed with their staves. . . . There, just at the bend, you see, Judas stooped and kissed him. It was the signal for clenched fists to fall on Jesus, and, above all those clenched fists, the hand of an apostle held aloft a sword. . . .

The words were so simple, yet they peopled the void with living forms. I could see Jesus, and Judas, and Peter, and John, and the rest of the disciples : I could see the soldiers and the flaming brands. . . .

This was what he said : “ Put up thy sword : for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword ! ” Those were the words he said then. But on another night he had told them : “ He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one ! . . . ” Luke has repeated it in his Gospel, as you no doubt remember : “ Sell your garments, and buy swords ! ” Yet : “ All they that take the sword shall perish by the sword ! ”

My guide fell silent. He took the path that crossed the narrow valley, and moved onward in the endless shadow of the rampart, between the two slopes where sepulchres jut out or gape in the ground. He did not address me, but now and then, so softly as scarcely to break the stillness, he would murmur words to himself as though he were thinking aloud.

When we were near the Tomb of Absalom I heard him say :

We used to call it the Tomb of Isaiah.

And as we stood on the little bridge further below :

It was in flood then. . . .

Again, as we climbed once more into the moonlight, up to those vague spaces beyond the projection of the eastern wall :

The city used to extend as far as here. . . . There were avenues of columns . . . well-heads . . . mosaics.

Why did I follow him ? Why did I hang on his every word as

though it were the key to a secret known only to him? Could he not have read, as well as I, Baedeker and Dalman's Itinerary and the Guide of Nôtre Dame de France? . . .

But there was something in the tone of his voice which gave the small commonplaces of archæology some strange sense of intimate, personal memory! Had the centuries rolled back? Had I a witness before me? Would the dead who must sleep till the dawn of the Day of Judgment rise from their sepulchres before the Last Trump had sounded to testify to the truth of his words?

Amidst the ruins on the downward slope, the man stopped. He stared down to the ravine of Gehenna to the left: farther away to the right, his eyes sought the tiny minaret of the Pool of Hezekiah below the village of Siloam: higher up, his gaze rested on the mosque of Aksa that gleamed on the terrace.

He seated himself on the capital of a fallen column, and, after a long pause, murmured:

The archers were warming themselves round the watch-fire of the guard . . . the voice of Caiaphas asked question after question . . . the cock crowed . . . listen, it is crowing now. . . . Yes . . . once . . . twice. . . . Poor Simon Peter—how he wept! . . .

He had propped himself on his elbows as he dreamed aloud. I saw the hand of an artisan, a broad, dusty foot to which a sandal was strapped, and, fastened about the folds of his robe, a leather girdle from which hung a leather wallet. I said to myself:

"He is one of those wandering monks who stimulate their religious fervour by the reconstruction of the life of Christ from stage to stage in the actual surroundings. Only, this particular devotee has a mania—none but the authentic places will satisfy him!"

Suddenly the pilgrim awoke from his dream. He glanced at me, rose, and said in an altogether different voice from that in which he had previously spoken:

Well, young man . . . (Why did he persist in calling me young? With his black beard, he looked younger than I did.) Well, young man, have you gained some slight sense of

your topography? We are now leaving the house of Caiaphas, and are going to Pilate's Prætorium.

He led me through the gate of Sion, along road after road, then into alleys that lost themselves in confusion amongst the wretched slums of Maugrah. As we pressed onward over the gloomy stones, he talked continuously, with a flow of words and a wealth of gesture in which I could find no trace of the shadow whose silence had so troubled me.

*He said: You are not, I take it, one of those learned gentlemen who place the Prætorium in the Antonia Tower—where the Turkish Barracks now stand, the Antonia Tower, which ever after the affair of the standards—with Pilate, you remember—was occupied by the Jewish Guard, and which had no entrance except from the outer sanctuary of the Temple! On the other side, between the tower and the Bezetha quarter, was a ditch seventy-five feet deep and two hundred and ten feet wide! Can you imagine Pilate crossing the sanctuary to return to his palace? Let us be sensible! . . . The truth is that Jesus was *not* condemned in the courtyard of the barracks—sorry as I am to say so!—any more than on that morning he went over all the stations of the Via Dolorosa. What, do you still believe in their Via Dolorosa? You ought to be the last to believe that! Even Catholic commentators no longer believe it! It is a fact that he was not burdened with the cross at the foot of the hill! He did not fall for the first time in front of the Austrian Hospital; he did not meet his mother at the bend of the road, or Simon of Cyrene before the Franciscan Chapel, or Veronica at the gate to the left! . . . As for Pilate's Prætorium, you shall see: by the side of the Curia, there was a square flanked by porticoes—the Xystus, precisely! An arcaded bridge linked it to the Temple. There the people held their assemblies; there . . .*

Again the pilgrim fell silent. The Wailing Wall towered

against the sky, the mirrored surfaces of its square stones dazzling in the moonlight. In the shadow at its foot, two belated Jews were uttering loud lamentations, as if they hoped to bring back the vanished scene by the strength of their cries. I imagined that I could see and hear, in company with them, all those other Jews whose pious grief I had so often witnessed, and I re-translated to myself their chant made up of tears and groans :

“For the palace which was laid low, we weep and are alone . . . for the Temple which was destroyed, we weep and are alone ! . . .”

Caftans trembled. Levites swayed their bowed forms to and fro.

“For the walls which were razed to the ground, we weep and are alone . . . for the glory that has been, and is no more . . .”

Hands beat at the stones. Foreheads were bruised against them. Lips were pressed to them. . . .

But, seized with sudden anger, my companion stormed :

Still at their everlasting snivelling, you see ! Rome and all its might crumbles away ; they weep. A Christopher Columbus discovers America ; they weep. A Danton liberates his country, liberates every country ; they weep. There are submarines below the sea, and aeroplanes in the sky ; they weep !

And he cried to them :

When will you have done with your snivelling, you snivellers ? A Jew does not weep ; he protests !

He had moved some distance away from me. Shuddering, he flung himself against the Wall, clawed at the stones, and kissed them wildly. But his prayer was no wail of grief—it was a command :

Send us the descendant of David whom you promised to us, Lord God—send us the Messiah, do you hear ? Not the day after to-morrow, nor to-morrow, but to-day, now ! Send the Messiah to us now !

He came back to me. His legs shook, his arms shook, his whole body shook. His face was convulsed, yet his gaze was fixed,

and not an eyelash quivered. He clutched me, and dragged me on. In front of the blue façade of the Mohammedan law-courts he again shouted :

Send the Messiah to us ! Send him now !

Then suddenly he stopped to listen.

Do you hear them ? Do you hear them clamouring ? They have condemned him, they have scourged him ! Now they have crowned him with thorns ! He is carrying the cross ! . . . not one of those tall crosses you see pictured. No, his cross was quite small : when they nailed him to it, he was scarcely off the ground !

He walked on as though he were in the midst of a throng, and I followed him under the same hallucination. He led me up steep alleys that lost themselves in confusion, but, as if he could see through the houses, he climbed up towards that invisible road while the invisible crowd climbed with him. Now, in the many voices of the rabble, he spat forth insults :

Charlatan ! False prophet ! Sorcerer, son of a sorceress ! He said that we must destroy the Temple ! He said that we must pay tribute to Cæsar ! To Golgotha with the spawn of Beelzebub !

"He is a madman," I thought. "This city unhinges men's minds. I have been told of a lunatic who climbs up to Calvary every day to see if the Messiah has come. This must be he !"

We were going through the bazaar. On the shuttered shops, on the moonlit side of the street, I could read the names and trades of the merchants in Arabic, French, English, and Hebrew : "Guedalia, Specialist in Turkish Slippers . . . Jeweller . . . Grocer . . . Cohen ben Cohen . . ." while he continued to rave :

We shall soon see if he destroys the Temple ! Traitor ! Spy ! Blasphemer ! Save yourself, King of the Jews ! Ascend to Heaven, Son of God ! . . .

Before the shop of "Mattathias, Haberdashery and Silks," his voice suddenly resumed its agony of inward grief :

This was where he fell for the first time ! . . . Oh,

the cross was light enough . . . but the scourging—you do not know what that means . . . gaping wounds stream blood . . . the skin ravel into shreds . . . now you can understand why he could endure no more, why he could only crawl. . . .

His own body was bent as he moved on ; his lowered eyes saw the Jesus who dragged himself wearily along the ground. I looked at him as he walked ahead of me in the gloomy pool of shadow that our figures threw on the moonlit stones, and such despairing pity emanated from his body that my own was shaken from head to foot by its vibrations.

Yet he had ceased to tremble : at every minute, his back, his knees stiffened and grew more rigid, as if each step drew him, in an agony of fear, nearer and nearer to the scene of some dreadful memory.

Near the Muristan, he said in a voice like that of a stone image :

This is where we came out of the city. . . .

Everything vanished from my sight—the square, the Russian establishment, the houses that mounted steeply, and the cupolas which rose in tiers : in place of them, I thought I saw long vanished battlements, a door in a rampart, a road that wound serpentine towards a bare hill. The voice of stone went on :

This was where he fell for the second time . . . this was where he fell for the third time . . . this was where he said to me——

“ He said to you ? ”

He said : “ Carry my cross ! ” I made no answer. . . . Then he said : “ Because you will not carry my cross, you shall walk . . . until I come again ! ” . . .

“ He is a madman,” I told myself, “ a madman who thinks he is the Wandering Jew ! ”

And the marble voice continued :

But when I come to this place—this place where I refused him, I must . . . I must carry his cross ! . . .

Now it was he who was burdened with the invisible cross, he who dragged himself up the shadowy steps of the winding alley, he who grazed his knees and breast on the stones, he who crawled on beneath the invisible cross !

In the blind alley where a column is set into the masonry of the wall he stopped, and lay stretched out full length, his face against the stones. To the left was the square of the Martyrium where the white dome of that subterranean chapel, which is supposed to be built over the fragments of the cross, emerges in the middle of the pavement. Silhouetted against the sky, I could see the spire of Calvary.

A strangled sound issued from the mouth pressed close to the dust.

Higher ? . . . I cannot ! . . . I tried to climb there once. . . . When I had dragged myself to the very top . . . they crucified me ! . . .

He ceased speaking. I thought he had fainted.

After a long time, when I had raised him, and set him against the door of the Coptic Convent, he said, utterly transformed :

*Pray don't feel perturbed : it's merely one of my brainstorms. It will pass ; everything passes. . . . Oh, I know you think I'm off my head, that the Wandering Jew is nothing but a legend. If only he were ! But I exist, you see ! I'm flesh and blood ! . . . I even feel I'm going to recover that good old Jewish sense of humour that you mention in your lectures ! I know you, Monsieur Fleg ! I've read your books . . . your *Why I am a Jew* ! I bought a copy at a second-hand bookstall in Paris ! Yes, I bought a dedicated copy for five sous ! It was worth it—even without the dedication, it would have been worth it ! . . . But, between ourselves, if Judaism had only Jews of the same calibre as yourself to rise in its defence, there would be no more anti-Semites—and why ? Because there would be no more Jews ! . . . And now, like everyone else, you are going to write a *Life of Jesus* ? . . . Oh,*

nothing's hidden from me ! You even find it original to broadcast the fact that, in Palestine, Jesus is not to be found ? . . . I found him, I assure you, and, as you have just seen, I find him still ! . . . What do you say ? You want me to give you material for your book ? You want me to tell you the history of Jesus ? Why not ? The only thing against it is that the subject has already been dealt with by several of my contemporaries : how can we discount them ? And how can I disentangle my memories ? Am I still the Jew whom Jesus knew ? Is he still the Jesus whom I knew ? I loved him as dearly as though I had been called Peter, Luke, or Matthew. . . . But since then I have seen so much, because of him ! . . . I have wandered from ghetto to ghetto through the ages ; to avenge our wrongs in some small degree, I have spread our petty scandals. The others repeated them—it was a measure of comfort to them in their wretchedness—and wrote pamphlets, illustrated or otherwise, which they passed from hand to hand behind the backs of the *goyim*.¹ The fantastic tales I invented ! I said that he was the son of a Roman soldier and a wench who distilled scent ! I said that when he was a mere baby he cursed the elders of Israel like a future Drumont ; that, when he was only a little older, he taught his comrades to worship idols, and learnt magic ; that he stole the Divine Name from the Holy of Holies, and concealed it beneath his garments when he performed his miracles ; that he bewitched all the trees in the world so that none of them would furnish the wood for his cross. Lastly, I swore that a gardener plugged up a leaking gutter with his body ! Lies ! Lies ! . . . Now I'm going to tell you the truth—but what is the truth ? As Pilate asked : “ What is the truth ? ”

I sat down beside him, with my back against the door, and he began his story.

¹ Non-Jews, Gentiles.

CHAPTER II

WE WERE WAITING for the Messiah . . . but you must understand what I mean by waiting. We were *really* waiting. It was no poor pretence, as it is to-day when your rabbis appear to invoke him in their prayers, while they secretly say to themselves : " What risk are we running ? He will never come." No, it was not like that. . . . Let me try and explain. During the war, when you were under fire in the trenches, how did you yourself await the coming of peace ? With body and soul, nerve and sinew, tense with expectancy ! With your heart attuned only to that hope ! That was how I waited for the coming of the Messiah nineteen hundred years ago. And do you know why ? . . . Because he was going to heal the sick, restore sight to the blind, and—above all !—the use of their limbs to the paralysed.

Are you wondering why I took such a burning interest in the paralysed ? I had been paralysed from birth. Now, perhaps, you begin to understand. . . .

Picture a child lying in its own filth, its arms knotted, its left leg stuck stiffly out, its right bent double : a canvas by Chagall ! But the arms of the living child hung heavily, its legs were rigid, and its tongue lolled from its mouth. . . .

Where did this child exist ? In some forgotten hamlet, in a mud hut whose door was a hole. . . .

My father ? My mother ? I must have had a father and mother : even Jews have fathers and mothers !

I heard stories of bandits and heroes—and are they not alike ?—God alone must be King over Israel, not the lascivious Emperor, nor Herod, his ally ! . . . Athronga,

the shepherd, had proclaimed himself the Messiah, and was followed by a band of fanatics ; the Romans blocked up the caves in which they lay, and suffocated them with smoke, or made spacious avenues by nailing them to wooden crosses at regular intervals along the highways. . . .

One day, when I was fifteen . . . (was I fifteen ?) . . . I was dug out of my filth, carried into the daylight, and borne away. I learnt for the first time that there were fig-trees laden with figs, palm-trees on which grew palm-leaves, a sky, a river, a town . . . and even more ! Now I was in clover, as you say in English—if you speak English. I was washed, and laid on a pallet in the shop of my Uncle Simeon who had adopted me. . . .

Reason this out with me, will you ? If my Uncle Simeon had adopted me, it was because I was an orphan ; if I was an orphan, it was because I had lost my parents ; if I had lost my parents, I must once have possessed them ! Yes, like everyone else in the world, you see, I once had parents ! . . .

.

My Uncle Simeon was a sandalmaker, and was helped by his two grown-up sons, Baruch and Reuben. I watched them as they shaped the leather, smoothed the wood, stitched with thick needles, and tapped away with hammers ; I watched their busy hands, and thought :

“ How lucky they are ! ”

And I looked at my own hands that hung uselessly.

How lucky, too, were my younger cousins : Nathan, Isaac, and Naaman. Each morning, just like their elders, they put on their *tefillin*.¹ I watched them tighten the straps round their foreheads and about their arms. They bowed their heads, and took three steps backward and

¹ Phylacteries : ritual straps.

three steps forward at the end of their prayer. When they went out or came in, they stretched up two fingers to touch the *mezuzah*¹ which hung beside the door.

But I could not touch the *mezuzah* ! I could not bind on the *tefillin* !

At night, when they came back from school, Uncle Simeon would ask :

“ What verse did you learn to-day ? ” And when they told him, he would explain it to them. But I was too stupid, I could not understand.

Often, he would speak of Hillel.

“ Hillel was my master, little ones,” he would say. “ Yes, the great Hillel himself. Be gentle like Hillel, little ones, not fierce like Schammai ! ”

His lips curved to laughter above his beard when he told them of the Gentile who had asked Schammai to teach him the whole of the Torah² during the time that he could balance himself on one leg !

“ Schammai sent him flying with blows of his pointer ! But do you know how Hillel answered him ? ‘ Do not unto others that which you would not they did unto you, that is the whole of the Law : the remainder is but exposition. Go forth and learn ! ’ ”

And Uncle Simeon smiled in his beard.

Yet we had to study the Torah—it was one of Hillel’s adjurations : “ Do not say: I will study it when I have time. What if you had no more time ? They that increase in fat will but increase the worms that must feed on them ; they that increase their riches increase their cares ; but they that increase their knowledge of the Torah increase their days, and obtain for themselves the life everlasting.”

But I, lying helpless, could observe none of its tenets,

¹ Amulet that contains verses from the Old Testament.

² The Law, the teachings of Moses.

and how could I study the Torah which gives joy in this world and the next? How could I, with my drooling lips, repeat a single verse? I was an ignoramus, an *am-haaretz*, and Hillel, the gentle Hillel, had also said:

“Never can an *am-haaretz* be holy!”

I knew, I had heard it whispered, that he who had no knowledge of the Torah was unclean. He could not give testimony, he was shunned when he journeyed forth, and no man would be his guest. He was never offered hospitality; no gifts of fruit were made to him, nor was he given bread. I knew, too, that my Uncle Simeon was one of the Pharisees, as you call them, those pure amongst the pure, who observed the Torah more strictly than any other sect, and who fled from all contact with the ignorant.

How had it come about that he had taken one so ignorant as I to dwell in the midst of his family?

.

Three times during the year, two or three of my cousins, or the whole family, went up to Jerusalem for the Festivals.

On their return, what tales they had to tell of the Outer Sanctuary with its colonnades, the Golden Door, the smoke of the altar, and the purple Veil! They described the High Priest's robe with its fringe of tiny bells, the Paschal Lamb, and the scapegoat who is sent forth into the desert with its burden of sin. . . .

Sin! I tried to think about sin. I had plenty of time to think as I lay on my pallet.

Once, I heard two *soferim*—you call them scribes, I believe—holding a discussion as they passed by. They were arguing about a verse (I forget exactly which one it was) from that psalm which speaks of forgiveness, sickness, and iniquity . . . (you will probably remember

it, as you have read so much). One of them exclaimed :

“ I say that quinsy is the punishment for calumny ! ”

And the other :

“ I say that dropsy is the punishment for self-indulgence ! ”

Diagnostics of this description would scarcely impress me to-day ! I have seen so many doctors during the last twenty centuries that I confess I am somewhat *blasé* ! But as I lay helpless, with impotent limbs, and listened to what they said, I thought :

“ If every illness is the punishment of a sin, for what sin am I punished, O God ? Is it because I am ignorant ? Is it because I know nothing of Thy Torah ? But it is because Thou hast paralysed me that I cannot study or observe the Law ! What sin have I committed against Thee, Lord God of the World, that Thou hast taken Thy Torah from me ? ”

I was twenty, or perhaps twenty-five, and was still a *schlemihl*¹ for my age ! How I envied everyone who knew the Torah ! When my cousin Reuben pricked the leather with his thick needle, I used to wish he would prick his fingers instead, and when my Uncle Simeon hammered away at the sandal he was making, I was sorry that he was not hammering away at the head of my cousin Baruch ! I had a certain amount of family feeling, you see ! . . . But afterwards I was overcome with remorse : “ They took you in, cared for you, fed you, ignoramus that you are ! Your sin is plain—the sin of envy ! God punished you in advance for it when He paralysed you at birth ! ”

Briefly, I was a *schlemihl* with a tortuous mind . . . my only happy moments were the times when my Aunt Sephora spoke of the Messiah. The others also spoke about him, but one said this, and another said that—

¹ Fool, duffer.

they could never agree. The Jews of that age were the same as they are to-day : if four of them were gathered together, they had at least four, and sometimes five, different opinions amongst them. . . . My Uncle would explain :

“ The Messiah is *God’s Anointed*, do you understand ? —he who has been anointed with the holy oil whose grace brings him close to God ! All our kings were God’s Messiahs. Our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are called Messiahs because they were close to God ; Israel, too, is called a Messiah, because it is God’s chosen race. Even the Gentile king, Cyrus, is called a Messiah by the prophet because he fulfilled God’s designs. As for the Messiah of Messiahs who has been promised to us . . . ”

But my Aunt Sephora did not explain the Messiah ; she awaited him.

“ He will come soon, my darling,” she said. “ Grandfather Zadok, who dwells with the Essenes, has calculated the year and the month and the day. He will judge the poor with righteousness, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth. He will smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins ! The sword will be changed to a ploughshare, and the spear to a reaping-hook. Even the wild creatures will dwell in peace : the wolf will lie down with the kid, and the lion with the lamb. The corn will yield ten harvests, the vine will yield an hundred-fold. Men will live for a thousand years, and will never grow old. There will be no more sick, no more blind——”

I interrupted her.

“ Will there be—will there be any more paralytics ? ” I stammered.

“No more, my darling,” she answered.

I fell asleep and dreamed ; in my dream, I too, was waiting for the Messiah.

But the years passed, and the Messiah had not come. Uncle Simeon had grown old ; his youngest sons had almost reached man’s estate. I was still paralysed.

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For some time past, however, whenever Uncle Simeon or his sons returned from the Festivals, they brought back strange tidings from Jerusalem. A hermit cried aloud in the desert of Judæa :

“Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.”

He was clothed in camel’s hair with a girdle of leather ; he fed on locusts and wild honey—ugh ! What unappetising fare, I thought ! . . . men went to him from all the land of Judæa and from Jerusalem, to the bank of the Jordan, and confessed their sins to him ; they swathed themselves in white linen, waded waist-deep into the river, and he emptied a cruse of water three times over their heads while he recited from Isaiah.

“What does it mean ? ” asked Baruch. “We baptise a Gentile when he becomes a Jew. But why should a Jew be baptised ? To convert him ? What is the use ? We are descended from Abraham, it seems to me, and so we serve God from the hour of our birth ! ”

“Whosoever is merciful to his fellow-men is the true descendant of Abraham,” replied Uncle Simeon with a smile. “But he who is not merciful, even though he is a son of Israel, has no kinship with Abraham. Thus, a Gentile whose life is righteous is equal in merit to a High Priest, the descendant of Aaron.”

“Perhaps we ourselves have become Gentiles because we have bowed down beneath the yoke of the Romans,” went on Baruch.

“ Or the yoke of sin,” added Reuben.

“ We must free ourselves from the Romans,” Baruch continued. “ This baptism is the enrolment for the day of revolt ! ”

“ We must wash away our sins,” said Reuben. “ This baptism is repentance for the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven ! ”

Uncle Simeon smiled, and was silent. But I murmured :

“ Is this man who baptises the people, the Messiah ? ”

“ No,” said Naaman, “ When they ask him, he answers : ‘ I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness : Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. I have baptised you with water, but there cometh one mightier than I after me, and he shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost ! ’ ”

I listened, and thought :

“ He is still hidden from us, but he will come soon ! And when he comes, I shall arise and walk ! ”

On one occasion, my three younger cousins came back from Jerusalem more excited than ever.

“ He has shown himself ! ” I thought. “ They have seen him ! ”

They had not seen him, but he had been seen by others. A certain Philip of Bethsaida had met him near the river, and had said later to a certain Nathaniel :

“ We have found him of whom Moses in the Law, and the prophets, did write ; Jeschou of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

To which Nathaniel had replied :

“ Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth ? ”

But subsequently he had recognised the Messiah in this same Jeschou.

And this Jeschou had disciples who baptised the people, as did Jokanaan, in the Jordan. Furthermore, the disciples of Jokanaan—or John, if you prefer—were furious because of the competition between them ! But John . . . (I give him his Christian name so that you will understand) . . . John had a higher understanding.

“ Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but I am sent before him,” he told them. “ He must increase, but I must decrease. When I baptised him, I saw the spirit descending from Heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him ! And lo, I heard a voice from Heaven saying : ‘ This is My beloved son in whom I am well pleased.’ ”

But Baruch protested :

“ If this Jeschou is the Messiah, why should he be baptised ? Is the Messiah a Goy ? I cannot understand any longer. . . .”

But what did it matter to me ? Goy or not, I waited for him to come.

On another occasion, shortly before Passover, Baruch and Reuben had gone down to the banks of the Jordan to meet him. But they had not found him, for Jesus had gone into the wilderness. The faithful kept watch for him at the foot of a mountain. He had taken no food with him, and they asked themselves :

“ Will he fast there for forty days and forty nights, as did Moses upon Mount Sinai ? ”

Some saw white shapes that came down, others a dark figure that climbed towards him, and said :

“ They are angels who minister to him under the sun ! ”

And :

“ It is Satan who tempts him in the shadows ! ”

When forty nights had passed, weary of waiting, many climbed to the summit. Baruch and Reuben were

amongst them. But Jesus had vanished, and men whispered :

“ Has he been borne hence by the Devil, or by angels ? ”

Again, during the Festival of Succoth,¹ a rumour had arisen that he would go up to the Temple. He was known to many now. The poor followed him, but he had friends amongst the élite, men such as Lazarus of Bethany, Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea, members of the Sanhedrin, of course ! . . . The people sought him, and asked themselves : “ Where is he ? Will he come ? He will come secretly. He is hiding himself.” Some said : “ He is a prophet, the son of David, the Messiah ! ” Others : “ Nay, but he deceiveth the people. . . . ” Suddenly, on the last day of the Festival, at the very moment when the Priest was pouring the water from the golden cruse into the silver cruse that stood on the altar, *he* had shown himself, *he* had spoken. . . . But Uncle Simeon and his sons had been too far back to see or hear him. They had only known he was there because of the crowd that murmured about them.

That same year, during the winter, a travelling merchant who had come down from Jerusalem told us stories that made my brain whirl as he displayed his leathers to Uncle Simeon. Jesus had healed the sick. He had restored sight to a man who had been born blind. Yes—he had spat on the ground, made clay of the spittle, and had anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. Then he had said to him : “ Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam.” The blind man had gone to the Pool,

¹ The Feast of Tabernacles.

had washed in it, and lo, he had been able to see ! But the people would not believe him, and had said : “ This is not he that was blind—it is another like him ! ” They had held an enquiry, as they do at Lourdes to-day, you know. His parents had been made to set forth with all due form that he was indeed their son, and had been born blind, and when the object of their enquiry had declared : “ One thing I know : That, whereas I was blind, now I see,” they had reviled him and cast him out under the pretext that he had altogether been born in sin !

“ He restores sight to the blind,” I thought. “ If only he can restore the use of their limbs to the paralysed ! ”

The merchant continued to talk, and now he was actually telling us about a paralytic ! . . . Have you been to the Pool of Bethesda ? At Jerusalem, you remember, behind the Convent of St. Anne. There is nothing very much to be seen to-day from the steps that lead down to it amongst the palm-trees and the ruins. But then there were two basins between the porticoes, one filled with clear water, the other with water that looked like blood. From time to time, the water would bubble : it seemed that an angel had troubled it. (I give you the explanation of the phenomenon for what it is worth !) And the first sick person who went down into the pool after it had been troubled was healed as soon as his garments were wet—that, at least, was what was maintained ! Only, the sick person had to go down into the water. There was one paralytic who had waited for thirty-eight years in the shadow of the porticoes, and had not yet succeeded in reaching the pool. There were none to carry the wretched creature down, nor could I have helped him at that time.

“ But Jesus drew nigh to him,” went on the leather merchant. “ And said : ‘ Arise, take up thy bed, and

walk ! ' And the paralytic arose, took up his bed, and walked ! ”

Imagine, you who pride yourself on your imagination, the effect of this story on one who had never, for as long as he could remember, been able to move hand or foot !

I listened avidly. The hammering had died away, awls were laid aside, knives no longer pared the leather. The silence seemed to double the weight of my useless limbs. I was aware that all eyes were turned on me . . . then I ceased to be conscious of their gaze.

“ Were you present when these miracles were performed ? ” asked Uncle Simeon, smiling in his beard. “ Or did you learn of them by hearsay ? ”

“ I was told by one who witnessed them, a man to whom falsehood is unknown,” replied the leather merchant.

“ Falsehood is common, truth rare,” said my uncle. “ Now let us talk of the leathers you have brought—what price do you require for them ? ”

That night, and every day, and every night that followed, I repeated to myself :

“ Arise ! Take up thy bed and walk ! ” . . .

My Aunt Sephora had not forgotten the words either. Sometimes, when I feigned sleep, I would overhear her as she recalled them to Uncle Simeon :

“ Suppose that it were true ! ” she said. “ Suppose this Jeschou could heal him ! ”

“ I will make enquiries in Jerusalem before the coming Festival,” replied my uncle. “ If the Messiah has revealed himself, people ought to be told.”

But there was amused disbelief in his voice.

On his return from Jerusalem, he brought back evil tidings. John the Baptist had been imprisoned in chains

in the fortress of Machærus ; Jesus, too, was suspect. Friends of my uncle, Pharisees like himself, had sent two spies to follow him. His teachings had angered them.

“ He intends to win the hearts of the people,” they reported. “ He is an impostor ! ”

How sorrowful these tidings made me. There was no longer a Saviour ! There would be no more miracles ! My limbs seemed to grow heavier and heavier.

“ Thou shalt not rise ! Stay on thy bed ! Thou shalt never know what it is to walk ! ”

In the shop opposite my Uncle Simeon’s, we had a neighbour who was entirely out of the ordinary. His name was Judas. Yes, you have guessed : it was the man of Kerioth, or Iscariot, as they called him after his birthplace.

He was a goldsmith. When the weather was fine, and they carried me out into the air on my pallet, I could see his beard, red as a flame, bent over his minute tools as he worked away with a will, reducing his gold to powder, so as not to waste a single grain. But he only toiled with his hands till noon, doing just enough to provide bread and onions for his wife and child. During the rest of the day, and late into the night as well, he studied, and thereby earned great praise from my Uncle Simeon, to whom study meant life. In addition to the Torah, he read other books: the Book of Enoch—the Apocalyptic writings, as you call them—but for this, my uncle, who was no visionary, esteemed him far less highly.

Often on the Sabbath, between the two prayers, Judas would come to our house, and hold discussions with my uncle. Invariably, he would conclude :

“ I am sure that this Jeschou—(let us call him Jesus,

shall we?)—this Jesus, of whom they speak, is the Messiah ! ”

And to prove it, he would quote passages from the Scriptures, and would reason as only a Jew can reason ! I could not understand either his argument or his quotations ; and Uncle Simeon would say to him :

“ What is to be gained by calculating the hour in which the Messiah will come ? Let God choose His own hour ! ”

Nevertheless, Judas continued to make calculations, and a day came when he sent his wife and child to his father in Kerioth, and himself departed. Three weeks later, a messenger brought a letter in which Uncle Simeon read :

“ I have seen the miracles with my own eyes. Come.”

The messenger offered to take us to him, but my uncle hesitated. Being in haste to return, the bearer said :

“ You will find the Master at Nazareth or Capernaum, or towards Gennesareth on the shore of the sea.”

And left us.

Oh ! What a fever I was in !

“ Will my uncle and cousins journey thither to assure themselves of the truth ? ” I thought. “ Or will they wait until he chances to come this way ? But if he does come, will he heal me ? I am unclean. I have never studied nor observed the Torah.”

From the dim recesses of my memory, I brought to light the prayers I had heard ; I repeated them word by word so that I might entreat Heaven in the customary ritual :

“ Adonai,¹ God of the World, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob . . . our God, our Father . . . Our Father who art in Heaven . . . ”

Had I been able, I would have recited the entire

¹ Lord God.

Tefilla,¹ and even the entire *Mischna* and *Gemara*,² which moreover did not exist at that time ! . . .

Luckily, my Aunt Sephora was able to persuade her husband. "If thy wife be of low stature," he used to quote, "bend down to hearken to her." However, she nearly always spared him the trouble of bending down, for she rose up to shower advice on him !

"We will buy two asses," she said. "My lord and I will ride, turn and turn about, on one. We will have a litter on wheels made for our nephew which the other ass can draw when the roads are good. Baruch and Reuben shall go with us to carry it when the ways are rough, and our three younger sons shall stay at home to look to the sandals and the needs of the children."

For, as you will suppose, my cousins were married, and none of them had neglected to increase and multiply !

¹ The Book of Prayer. ² The *Mischna* and the *Gemara* form the Talmud.

CHAPTER III

IF I WERE A WRITER OF ROMANCES like you, I would describe all the details of my journey in picturesque language. But a writer would be better equipped than I : he would know the country through which we passed, whereas I still remain in ignorance. Lying full-length on my swaying litter that almost touched the ground, I drowsed, only jarred back to consciousness as it jolted over ruts and stones. When I chanced to open my eyes as we crossed mountain, plain or valley, what did I see ? The lively hind-quarters of an ass ! Sometimes, by way of a change, I looked up, and tried to fix my mind on something different : *the Kingdom of Heaven*. What did they mean, those three small words, or rather, those two small words—for, as you know, we say it in two words in Hebrew—what did they mean, those words I had heard so often in my Uncle Simeon's house : *the Kingdom of Heaven* ? When Heaven held sway, would all that blue above me mantle the earth ? But if the Kingdom of Heaven were the Kingdom of God, did it mean that God, whom we called King of the World, was not yet reigning over the world ? What hindered Him ? Was it man's iniquity ? Was man's iniquity, my iniquity, mightier than the Almighty ? If that were true, how could any man, even though he were a Messiah, bring about the coming of the Kingdom ?

When we halted to refresh ourselves in the shade of a terebinth or carob tree, Uncle Simeon, after he had prayed, would sometimes tell us what we call a *maschal*, and what they call a *parable*.

“ Two ass-drivers,” he said, “ hated one another with

a great hatred. There came a day when one of them saw the other's ass stagger and fall beneath the weight of its load, and he passed by. But as he went his way, he suddenly bethought himself of the commandment of Moses, our Master, which ordains : ' If thou meet thine enemy's ass lying under its burden, thou shalt surely help with him.' Thereupon, he retraced his steps, and helped his enemy, who said to him in amazement : ' I knew not thou hadst so much love for me.' They both returned to the inn, ate and drank together, and became friends. Thus does peace spring from the Torah ! ”

There was another *maschal* that Uncle Simeon used to tell us :

“ A king invited all his servants to a banquet, but did not tell them when the feast was to be held. The foolish servants remained at work in their week-day clothes, for they thought : ' There is time and to spare ; no feast can be held until all is made ready.' But the wise servants left their tasks, and put on their Sabbath garments, for they thought : ' The king lacks neither wine nor meat ; he is always in readiness, the banquet will not tarry.' Suddenly, the king appeared, and summoned his servants. The wise amongst them were the first to enter, clothed for the feast ; next came the foolish in all their filth. When he saw his wise servants, the king rejoiced, but when he saw the late-comers, he waxed wroth. To the wise servants he said : ' Be seated, eat and drink ! ' but to the foolish servants : ' Go forth, you shall but look on at the feast ! ' Thus will it be when the Kingdom of Heaven comes : those who are in readiness shall be made welcome, but those who are unprepared shall not enter in ! ”

This was what Uncle Simeon told us, and I ventured to ask :

"What must we do so that the Kingdom will come?"

"We must begin by overthrowing the Romans," replied Baruch, whom the others, I did not know why, called the *Zealot*.

But Reuben, who often went to visit Grandfather Zadok, and whom the others called the *Essene*, said:

"The Kingdom cannot be won by violence. It will be won by repentance!"

"It will be won by the Torah!" answered Uncle Simeon.

But my Aunt Sephora said nothing.

"How will it be won by the Torah?" I wanted to know.

"When all the Children of Israel observe the Torah, even though it be for a single Sabbath, the Messiah will come!"

"But what is there in the Torah that can make the Messiah come?" I asked again.

"Six hundred and thirteen commandments were revealed to Moses, our Master, upon Mount Sinai," said my uncle. "Then came David who reduced them to thirteen. (I need not repeat them to you, for you know them.) Next came Isaiah who reduced them to six: '*Which of us can dwell near a devouring flame? He who walks upright, speaks truth . . .*' and so on and so on. After him, came Micah who reduced them to three: '*He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy . . .*' and so forth. Last came Amos who reduced them to one: '*Thus saith the Lord unto the House of Israel: seek ye Me, and ye shall live.*'"

"But if Amos reduced them to one single commandment, why must we observe six hundred and thirteen?" I objected.

"Because the Holy One, blessed be His name, tells us that we cannot observe even one commandment

until we have learnt to observe them all," said my uncle.

I did not understand, and thought :

"An *am-haaretz* like myself will never be able to understand !"

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We had to journey across Samaria. From Baruch, I learnt that the Samaritans had long been the enemies of God ; that they had erected an iniquitous temple on their mountain to the true sons of Abraham ; that their meat and bread were unclean ; and that, in common justice, they would have no part in the resurrection.

Near Sichar, we halted at Jacob's Well. In those days, there were none of those buildings which now mar the landscape. The underground chapel where an attendant now sells picture-postcards had not yet been built ; nor was there any sign of that winch which creaks as it lowers the triple lights to the depths so that tourists can see the water. No, everything was far simpler then. There were only olive-trees, the Well, and a woman beside it.

This woman told us her story.

"I have seen him," she said. "He spoke to me."

"Whom have you seen ?"

"The Messiah !"

Her eyes still held the vision of him ! He had spoken to a Samaritan woman !

"Though he did not know me, he knew who I was, knew that I had had five husbands, and that the man with whom I was dwelling was not my husband ! I said to him : 'Our fathers worship in this mountain, and you say that it is in Jerusalem that men should worship.' He answered : 'You worship you know not what : we know what we worship : for salvation is of the Jews, but the hour cometh—soon it will be neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem that you shall worship. The true

worshippers shall worship in spirit and in truth, for God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.' Then I said : ' I know that the Messiah cometh,' and he replied : ' I that speak unto thee am he ! ' I bore these tidings to my people ; he entered into the city with me, and for two days he dwelt among us. Many believed his words."

While she was speaking, Uncle Simeon raised his head, and listened intently ; Aunt Sephora wept. But I thought :

" Yet this Samaritan woman has no knowledge of the Torah ! "

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When we reached Nazareth, we stopped almost at the very top, near that fountain which is now called the Virgin's Fountain. The women were not filling flasks with the water as they do to-day, but they were gossiping together, just as they gossip now.

Uncle Simeon asked an ancient crone if Jesus, the son of Joseph, was in the town.

" The son of Mary ? " she muttered ungraciously—(actually she said *Miriam*). " No, he has gone—we have done with him ! I hope we shall see him no more ! "

" Why, what has he done to you ? "

Immediately, there was an outburst of meaningless gabble and abuse—we might have been standing in a village baker's shop !

" First go and ask him why his mother bore him in a stable at Bethlehem ! "

" Why ? Because no one knows when he was conceived, or how ; by whom or what he was begotten ! "

" Poor Joseph ! Happy for him that he is dead ! "

" And now this brat that he brought up has left his trade ! "

"Instead of earning a living for his mother like his brothers, he wanders about, here, there and everywhere, and makes out that he is a prophet !"

"Even when he was a mere baby, there was no holding him !"

"His playmates saw some fine goings-on !"

"He made them spread their cloaks on the ground——"

"So that he could sit on them——"

"And made them adore him like a king !"

"Even then, he pretended he could perform miracles !"

"He said he could carry water in the skirt of his gown !"

"And that he could model clay sparrows that would fly !"

"Go and ask the *hazan*¹ at the synagogue !"

"He taught him—he'll tell you !"

"Go down this way, and you will see the carpenter's shop where the two roads meet. They won't make any more chests or doors or ploughshares ! They daren't show themselves any longer ! They've all gone !"

"Then turn to the left up the hill. Anyone will show you the way."

The synagogue had not yet been transformed into a church ; as yet, it did not contain the tomb of the Reverend Father Picavet. But the *hazan* was there, and he was furious !

"Don't mention that urchin to me ! Try as I would, I could never teach him a thing ! When he was five years old, he actually wanted to explain the alphabet to me—*me* ! He wanted to explain why some of the letters are single, some double, why *aleph* comes before *beth*, and *daleth* after *gimmel* ! Never have I seen such brazen impudence ! I had to insist on his leaving the

¹ Cantor.

school ! They took him away, and what was bound to happen happened : he taught himself, and a fine job he made of it ! Just think, he walked in here one Sabbath, stood in front of the chair that belongs to the *parnass*¹ and read aloud : ‘ The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel . . . ’ That passage from Isaiah about the Messiah, you know . . . and when he had finished, he gave back the scroll, sat down, and guess what he said ? ‘ This day is the Scripture fulfilled. I am he whose coming was promised ! ’ You can imagine what a scandal it made ! The son of Mary, whom we all knew, the brother of Jacob, Jude, little Joseph and Simon whom we remembered as babies ! We knew all his sisters, too ! A carpenter, a dullard who had never been taught, claiming to be the Messiah ! . . . Naturally, we were furious ! But he again began to speak, and do you know what he dared to say : ‘ Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land ; but unto none of them was Elias sent.’

“ Those were his very words ! ‘ And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet ; and none of them were cleansed saving Naaman the Syrian.’ What did that mean, I ask you ? Did he mean that a Syrian or a Sidonian was worth more than one of the Children of Israel ? The Children of Israel soon proved the contrary to him ! . . . Did you notice on your arrival that dark ravine between the two mountains ? They dragged him out of the synagogue, and hurled him down headlong ! That is what befalls a pupil who will not be taught ! Unfortunately, he managed to escape, and is still at large ! . . . ”

Ah, my dear sir, how right Jesus was when he said :

¹ Ruler of the synagogue.

“A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country !”

.

Yet what a country ! I am a great walker, as you are aware, though I can hardly say the object of my walks is to admire the beauties of nature ! But as I was borne along on my litter from Nazareth to the Sea of Galilee (which used to be called Lake Tiberias) I felt something infinitely soothing in the air. I tried to see what lay on either side of me, and caught glimpses of blue meadows. The ass that drew my litter was outlined against the blue, and was moving towards a blue horizon. I thought :

“Can this be the Kingdom of Heaven ? Is all this blue the blue of the skies that have already come down to mantle the earth ?” . . .

Do you remember the pink villa that Lord Melchett built beside the lake, with its groves of palm-trees and its ice-plants ? That was where we questioned the fishermen who were dragging their empty nets. They knew Jesus.

“If he were here, our nets would be full,” they said. “Last month, Simon, one of our comrades, had fished all night, and had taken nothing. ‘Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets,’ Jesus told him. Simon obeyed, and when he drew up his nets, they were so full that they broke. So he beckoned to those who were in the other ship, and they came, and filled both the ships so that they began to sink. Then Simon was afraid because of the miracle ; he fell on his knees before Jesus, and cried : ‘Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord,’ and his brother Andrew, and the sons of Zebedee, his companions, likewise trembled. But Jesus said to them : ‘Fear not : follow me. From

henceforth, you shall be fishers of men.' We, too, would have followed him, if he had willed . . . But how should we set about becoming fishers of men ? ”

The fishermen told us a second story :

“ One night, Jesus was crossing the lake with his disciples. Other ships followed. Suddenly, a great tempest arose, and the waves began to overwhelm the boats ; at any moment, it seemed that they must founder. Jesus was asleep, his head pillowed on a cushion, but his disciples woke him, crying : ‘ Master, we perish ! ’ He opened his eyes, arose and rebuked the wind ; he said to the sea : ‘ Be still ! ’—the wind dropped, and there was a great calm. . . . Another time, he descended from the mountain where he had gone to pray ; the ship was far from the shore, and he saw that the rowers were weary, for the wind was against them. At the fourth watch of the night, they saw him coming towards them, and lo ! he was walking on the sea ! They supposed that he was a spirit, but he came closer, and they knew him. ‘ Be of good cheer, it is I : be not afraid,’ he said, and went up into the ship. The wind died away ! . . . What do you make of these things ? What manner of man is this who walks on the water ? ”

“ What does he say of himself ? Does he call himself the Messiah ? ” asked Uncle Simeon.

“ He does not say it, but there are many who say it,” said the fishermen. “ Follow the sea-shore : you will find him at Gennesareth, or Capernaum, or Bethsaida ; and when you have seen him, you, too, will call him the Messiah.”

Then they stooped down to me, and added :

“ You journey towards him in a litter, but you will return upright ! ”

And as I was borne along, with the blue sky overhead, the blue sea lapping the shore, I thought .

“ If he walked upon the water, surely he will be able to make me walk on the earth ! ”

.

At Capernaum, we heard still more tales of miracles. But those who told them were not mere eye-witnesses—they themselves had been healed by Jesus !

There was the woman who had been afflicted by hæmorrhage, as you call it.

“ For twelve years, I had suffered from an issue of blood,” she said. “ I had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all I had, yet was nothing bettered—rather I grew worse. But when I touched the hem of his garment, the fountain of my blood dried up, and I was healed ! ”

Next, the Centurion’s servant told us his story :

“ He never came nigh me, yet he healed me also. I lay in the house and was like to die. But while my master entreated him for me at the gates of the city, my sufferings ceased, and I was restored ! ”

Then we listened to the young daughter of Jairus, a ruler in the synagogue.

“ They thought me dead,” she said. “ The mourners had begun their wailing. I heard naught, knew naught, for I too believed myself dead. Then he came in, and took my hand. ‘ Maid, arise ! ’ he said, and I arose straightway. ‘ Let food be brought to her,’ he told my mother, and I ate honey, a cake, and two figs ! ”

But stranger than all the rest was the wonder of Jairus, the *parnass*.

Of course you remember the synagogue at Capernaum—at Tel-Hum where the Franciscan Fathers live. Now it is a tumbled confusion of capitals and cornices, but in those days the building whose ruins you rave over (it being the fashion at present to rave over ruins !) did not

exist. There was another, a little to the right of it, not nearly so imposing—you would not have found a single solitary centaur, lion, eagle, or even a turkey-hen engraved on the stones ! Before the half-open door of this synagogue, Jairus stood and cried :

“ Never have I seen his like ! . . . That which he says surpasses even that which he does ! Do you think that he holds forth in the names of our Elders, as do our Rabbis, or in the name of the Holy One, blessed be His name, as do our Prophets ? No—he speaks as one having authority, and not as the Scribes ! He does not say : ‘ Adonai hath said,’ but : ‘ I say.’ He does not say : ‘ Our forefathers said,’ but : ‘ Our forefathers said this : I say that ! ’ Nor does he take heed when his words are contradictory ! On one day, he will say : ‘ Think not I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets ; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven or earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the Law till all be fulfilled.’ Yet on another day : ‘ No man putteth new wine into old bottles.’ What does he mean by the new wine and the old bottles ? Does he mean that the Torah is too old for him ? Does he desire to change it ? Perhaps you understand—but I, for my part, cannot understand ! ”

“ But does he claim to be the Messiah ? ” asked my Uncle Simeon ?

“ No,” replied the *parnass*, “ Far from it ! He will not suffer others to call him the Messiah ; he is even loath that they should speak of his miracles. There are times when he will not work them : ‘ Will ye not believe except ye see signs and wonders ? ’ and he goes alone into the mountain to pray. Into the mountain ! What folly, when he could pray in a synagogue like mine ! He went forth with no word of warning yesterday morning. I am sure

his disciples will bring him back. Wait at the inn—you will not be the only guests ! ”

How long the time of waiting seemed !

“ Why doesn’t he call himself the Messiah any longer ? ” I asked Uncle Simeon. “ At Sichar, by the Well, and at Nazareth, too, he called himself the Messiah.”

My uncle smiled.

“ The *hazan* and the Samaritan woman thought they heard him say he was the Messiah, but did he really say so ? ” he answered. “ I have not heard him say so ! Perhaps the Jews in that neighbourhood did not receive him with much ardour, or perhaps he wishes to avoid ravines and rough usage in the days to come ! ”

“ Or perhaps he fears the Romans, and the sons of Herod,” said Baruch the Zealot. “ The Messiah must cast out the Romans, and the Tetrarch’s brood. He has need of an army. If he proclaims himself too soon, they will imprison him like that same John the Baptist who now lies in chains in the fortress of Machærus ! ”

But Reuben the Essene replied :

“ Perhaps he has found that men are not yet ready to receive him—and will only reveal himself to them when they are prepared ! ”

While I thought :

“ Am I prepared—I who am ignorant, and have no knowledge of the Torah ? Am I prepared—I, the sinner, who envy all who have studied the Law ? ”

CHAPTER IV

THE INN WAS FILLING UP. Crowds arrived from Judæa and Idumæa, from the borders of Tyre and Sidon, from Decapolis, and other countries from beyond the Jordan. You can imagine how the inn-keepers put up their prices ! They even had to turn people away !

One morning, Baruch and Reuben carried me out of the town on my litter in the direction from which we had come. Were they taking me home ? I raged helplessly.

But Aunt Sephora, who was following with my uncle, said softly :

“ You are going to see him.”

Could it be true ? Now I understood why the road was almost impassable. There were crowds in front of me, crowds behind me—all were moving towards him.

“ Whom will he heal ? ”

We halted in the plain, a little beyond the peak near the Seven Springs—you know it, don't you ? I could not see a single blade of grass ; wherever I looked there were bodies—upright, seated, recumbent—wedged closely together. Beside me, a figure shook with palsy ; a little way off, I caught sight of a face that was a running mass of sores.

“ I wonder how many paralytics there are,” I thought.

To my left, a voice repeated the miracle of the water changed into wine at the wedding-feast at Cana. There was a murmur of prayers and, at intervals, a hideous outcry that sounded as though a thousand dogs had howled in unison.

“ A man possessed by devils,” explained Aunt Sephora.

Suddenly, there were ripples of excitement in the throng.

“ They are coming ! They are coming ! ”

“ Up there ! On the mountain ! ”

“ Five of them are coming the other way ! Now they have met ! Let us climb up to them ! ”

“ No, he wishes to be alone with the Twelve ! ”

“ Look, they are sitting in a semi-circle as though they were at school ! ”

“ He is going to speak to them ! He is speaking to them ! ”

I could see nothing : nothing but backs, heads, uplifted arms that blotted out the mountain and the sky....

Now the multitude was on the move again. My litter jolted up the path. We were drawing near ! I was drawing near ! . . . But how far I had still to go !

“ Do you hear his voice ? ”

I could not hear a sound !

.

Another day, my litter was set down on the shore between two blind men who were guided by dogs.

Fingers pointed to a sail that glided over the sea. It came closer, grew larger as it approached, and was hauled down ; as the ship neared land, the anchor was dropped.

To left and right of me, from the slopes behind me, there was a burst of acclamation. Someone stood on the deck, with the sun behind him. I could not distinguish his face, I could only see a figure that spoke. How sweetly the words were borne to me across the water ! They fell on my listening ears as though they had been uttered for me alone !

“ Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God ! Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the

earth ! Blessed are ye that hunger now, for ye shall be filled ! Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh ! Blessed are the merciful, for they shall find mercy ! Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall see God ! . . .”

As I listened, I was filled with an ecstasy of wonder !

Blessed art thou ! . . . Every fibre in my body quivered with the realisation of the falseness of all I had hitherto felt and believed. . . .

Because thou dost suffer, thou art blessed ! . . . Everything whirled before my eyes. . . . Would the mountains flow like rivers ? Would the sea arise like a mountain ?

The others, they had never suffered—they were the unblessed ! . . . Was everything reversed ? Had white become black ? Black become white ! Was grief joy—joy grief ? . . .

Blessed art thou . . . for thine is the Kingdom of Heaven ! . . . The Kingdom of Heaven for me ? For me who knew nothing, had nothing ? Was it *because* I had nothing, *because* I was nothing, that I would be given the sum of joy, be joy incarnate ? . . .

I listened to much more that was lovely that day ; for he said : “ Unto him that smiteth thee on one cheek, offer also the other,” and : “ Him that taketh away thy coat, forbid him not to take thy cloak also.” He told us to love and forgive our enemies, set forth countless precepts that he must already have set forth, and which I was to hear again and again—for he never feared to repeat his counsels. As I listened, I was filled with such tenderness as I had never yet known.

“ Has the Kingdom come ? ” I thought. “ No—if the Kingdom had come, I should arise and walk ! . . . When will he say to me : ‘ Take up thy bed, and walk ’ ? ”

The sail had once again been hoisted, the anchor weighed. Smaller and smaller grew the ship as it glided over the waves into the sun. . . .

.

That night, there were debates and discussions in the courtyard of the inn. In those blessed days, the Jews had not yet reached the point of splitting hairs in four, but they already split them into three !

Amongst the rest, was a Scribe called Doeg, a former pupil of Schammai, whom my uncle had known in Jerusalem when he himself was being taught by Hillel. This Scribe was muttering in a corner.

“ He speaks eloquently, I admit,” he contended. “ But are they his own words ? ‘ The meek shall inherit the earth ’ comes from the Psalms. ‘ Comfort to all that mourn ’ was promised in Isaiah. ‘ Love thy neighbour as thyself ’ comes from Moses, and Ben Sirach said : ‘ Forgive and ye shall be forgiven.’ ”

But Uncle Simeon replied thoughtfully :

“ What matter if these things have already been said ? He says them differently. It seemed to me that I had never heard them before. . . . ”

There was a good deal of truth in my Uncle Simeon’s words. Since then, I myself have compared the passages—one has to have some interest to occupy one’s time during twenty centuries ! I have read the parallels drawn by your scholars in their miscellanies between our Jewish precepts and those of Jesus. A resemblance is apparent in all of them ; even the words are sometimes identical. Yes—Rabbi Tarphon spoke of the mote in the eye, and the beam ; Rabbi Eliezar set forth that *yes* is an oath, and *no* is an oath, that spiritual adultery is as bad as adultery in the flesh, and that the hand which gives must not be conscious of giving. And so on down to *Our Father*, the essence of Christianity from beginning to end, yet from end to beginning—Jewish ! . . . But in our writings, in the Old Testament, and the two Talmuds, the spirit of Christianity is sprinkled and diffused like the salt in the sea ; whereas, in their Gospels it is condensed and

compressed like the salicylic acid in aspirins. Moreover, the Christianity of the Gospels has a proprietary name—the name *Jesus* ! . . .

“Granted that he says the same things differently,” replied the Scribe. “But does he say them any better? To begin with, he does not even know his subject matter! Where, for instance, did he find in our writings: ‘Thou shalt hate thine enemy’? It is nowhere written! And ‘An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth!’ Surely he must know that restitution has already taken the place of retaliation, and will take its place for ever!”

“Yes,” answered my Uncle Simeon indulgently. “I noticed several discrepancies in his reasoning and quotations, but we must overlook them. He was not taught, as we were, by a Hillel or a Schammai! He taught himself, and will yet learn. We must give him time!”

“He is untaught—agreed,” said Doeg. “Yet he presumes to teach a greater justice! Does not that of the Pharisees, yours, mine, suffice him? Do you remember that in his discourse from the ship—a discourse which he has already given, and to which, thanks to God’s mercy, he does not give vent every day!—he said: ‘Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time: Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment; but I say unto you that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment, and whosoever shall say to his brother: *Raca*! shall be in danger of the Sanhedrin; but whosoever shall say: Thou fool! shall merit the punishment of *Gehinnom*¹ and hell-fire!’ . . . It seems that a moment of anger is as great a sin as murder; that he who spews forth an insult is damned! Is this his greater justice?”

¹ Hell.

“ He is still young, and has all the ardour of youth,” responded my uncle mildly. “ Even if he does exaggerate, our prophets fell into the same fault. He speaks both as a prophet and a rabbi. Hence your bewilderment—it is long since a prophet arose in our midst.”

“ Prophets—we have no need of prophets ! ” said the Scribe. “ The wise men, the rabbis, have taken their place, and surpassed them ! It lies with us to see that the Torah is observed ! ”

“ But,” timidly put in my cousin Reuben the Essene, “ perhaps it is because the Kingdom is at hand that the Master exacts more than the Torah from the Torah ! ”

“ Then why does he reiterate : ‘ Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy-laden ; my yoke is easy, and my burden is light ’ ? ” thrust back Doeg.

“ Light ! ” exclaimed Baruch the Zealot. “ Is it a light burden to labour for the Romans, or to go two miles if they compel us to go one ? Let us help our enemies, pray for our enemies, love our enemies, by all means—only, who are these enemies ? If they are my own personal enemies who have harmed none but me, I fully and freely forgive them ; the Torah commands me to bring back my enemy’s ox or his ass when they go astray, and so much the more to help him himself. Whether he be Jew or Gentile, I will love him if I can ; the Torah commands me to love *all living creatures*. But as for the enemy of Israel (who is the enemy of God since God chose Israel, and Israel alone chose Him), must I love him for the simple reason that the sun shines on the righteous and the unrighteous, and that it rains on the just and the unjust ? Must I submit myself to the Romans ? Must I bare my breast to them ? Must I accept their yoke ? Of what use is a Messiah to me if, under his sway, I have to serve the Romans instead of God ? ”

But Reuben objected gently :

“In the Kingdom of God, there will be no more Romans !”

.

Three days later, we waited for Jesus on the road which leads to Bethsaida . . . it is overgrown with brush-wood now, but then it was a busy highway. The Jordan marked the boundary between the two tetrarchies, that of Herod Philip and that of Herod Antipas where we now found ourselves. As for the Romans who occupied Judæa and Jerusalem . . . but I need hardly give you a history lesson ! . . . To be brief, as I lay in my litter I saw the customs-house where bundles were being opened, and beasts unloaded, and overheard the camel-drivers apply a thoroughly unflattering epithet to Levi, called Matthew, the customs official. Like every customs official of every age, he *rejoiced* in the most unsavoury reputation !

From the moment that Jesus appeared between two of his disciples, there was a frenzied scramble and a wild outburst of cries and entreaties. Women touched his robe and kissed it frantically. Halt, lame, hunchbacks and bandy-legged flung themselves at his feet, and licked the dust. The scrofulous exposed their scabs, the ulcerous their running sores ; the blind fumbled in the air, and sought his eyes.

Suddenly a demoniac hurled them all aside, with a hideous howl. He jostled, scratched, and struck out with clenched fists, from which hung the rattling links of the chains he had snapped. He foamed at the mouth, his teeth chattered, and his knees knocked together with the sound of a hammer against an anvil. Beneath his tattered garment, shudders rippled up and down his body like waves on the sea.

“Let us alone,” he shrieked. “What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth ? Thou art come to

destroy us ! I know thee who thou art : the Holy One of God ! ”

But Jesus rebuked him, saying :

“ Hold thy peace, and come out of him ! ”

The demoniac flung himself backward, bending his body like a bow till it touched the ground. A convulsion shook him from head to foot, and Something leapt from his mouth with a final howl.

Then he arose, fell on his knees, and with a voice that was the voice of angels—if there are angels—said :

“ Blessed art thou, Jesus of Nazareth ! ”

This I saw with my own eyes, these eyes that now see you—I can see as clearly as though it were daylight by this moon. Hysteria ! Suggestion ! Hypnotism ! I know that’s what you are going to say. But can you tell me of any hypnotist who can work such wonders ? I have been searching for twenty centuries, and haven’t succeeded in finding him yet !

That evening, the same crowd wailed and implored before the house of Simon-Kephas—or Peter, if you prefer. There was talk of the latest miracles : the leper cleansed of his leprosy, the raising of the widow’s son at Nain, and an even greater miracle—Jesus had said to Matthew, as he sat at the receipt of custom, “ Follow me,” and Matthew, the paid servant of the Romans, their tax-collector and publican, had followed him !

As I lay on my litter, I thought :

“ How shall I ever draw near to the Rabbi through such a crowd, when even those with the full use of their limbs cannot draw near him ? Shall I alone remain unhealed ? Is my sin, the desire to understand, so great that I shall never reach him ? ”

And, as I had murmured to myself during so many sleepless nights, I now repeated once more :

“ Arise ! Take up thy bed and walk ! . . . Arise ! Take up thy bed and walk ! . . . ”

Suddenly I felt my litter sway. By the four cords that were fastened to it, it was being hoisted up above the heads of the crowd. Baruch, Reuben, and two others uncovered the roof where he stood. I could hear the voice of Jesus. Slowly, my litter was lowered until I lay at his feet.

“ Be not afraid,” he said. “ Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. . . . ”

Something, I knew not what, stirred softly in my bones. I was conscious of a warm tide that streamed through my veins—the warmth of my own blood. I felt the life-blood pulse through me.

“ I am forgiven ! . . . If I am forgiven, I shall be healed ! . . . ”

Power emanated from Jesus ; it flowed towards me, filled me, flooded me. . . .

In a corner, voices were raised in complaint. Sternly, he said :

“ Why reason ye these things in your hearts ? Whether it is easier to say to the paralytic : ‘ Thy sin be forgiven thee,’ or : ‘ Arise ! Take up thy bed, and walk ’ ? But that ye may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins . . . ”

He turned to me, and I heard him command :

“ Arise ! Take up thy bed, and walk ! ”

The power that flowed from him tugged softly at my arms and legs, whose rigidity relaxed ; I felt it under my ribs, my back, my neck ; it was raising me up !

“ Arise ! Take up thy bed, and walk ! ” I repeated. “ Arise ! Take up thy bed, and walk ! . . . ”

Suddenly, I was transformed into another being ; I knew this other being was on his feet, knew that he was walking, moving away from the litter, knew he was

coming back to lift it ! And this other being was myself ! It was I who stooped, raised the litter and bore it away ! I was walking ! I was walking ! The power of Jesus was in every step I took ! . . . But your Monsieur Couchoud affirms that this Jesus never existed ! Think, Monsieur Fleg ! This same Jesus said to me—to me myself whom you now see before you—" Arise ! " And I arose ! Yet your Arthur Drews, Bruno Bauers, Strausses and Robertsons have the audacity to tell me that he is a mere symbol, a legend, a fairy-story, a solar myth ! They say this to *me* who could not walk, and who walked at a single word from him ! Pah—don't talk to me of such persons, or I shall again be *paralysed*—with fury ! . . .

Oh ! If you had seen me when I returned to the inn with my litter on my shoulders ! If you had seen my Aunt Sephora as she kissed me, wept over me, and embraced me ! She, I assure you, did not take me to be a myth ! Nor did my Uncle Simeon, nor my cousins, nor any of those who were gathered there.

Naturally, a discussion immediately arose—discussions are the breath of life ! Doeg, Schammai's disciple, had begun again :

" Why has this man spoken blasphemies ? Who can forgive sins but God alone ? "

But Uncle Simeon, always inclined to leniency through the teaching of Hillel, his master, and rendered still more indulgent by the miracle of my cure, exercised all his subtlety on behalf of Jesus :

" He did not say : ' I forgive thee thy sins.' He said : ' Thy sins be forgiven thee,' which is quite a different matter. If he knows that the Holy One, blessed be His name, has given him the power to heal at certain moments, he also knows that the Holy One has granted forgiveness. Wherefore, as Nathan announced it to David, he announces it to the sinner in the name of the Father."

“Are you comparing this blasphemer to a prophet?” exclaimed the disciple of Schammai. “May his bones be broken! A dog who allows men to call him the Son of God!”

“We are all the sons of God,” replied Uncle Simeon.

“But the Son of Man! By what right does he call himself the Son of Man?”

“By the whole world’s right! In good Hebrew, a son of the man . . .” (between ourselves, though, it would be better to translate it as *the son of man*—it would be more accurate and more lucid!) “. . . a son of man is a man, a poor man. Jesus is a son of man, I am a son of man, you are a son of man. . . .”

“But the Son of Man *who descended with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and was given dominion and glory and power and a kingdom!* The Son of Man *whom all peoples will serve, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and whose kingdom will not be destroyed!* Is he a son of man, as we are; a poor man, as we are? Oh! I know your Jesus apes humility when he calls himself the *Son of Man*. He dare not—or, rather, he no longer dares—say openly what he means to say. But he hints, he implies, and allows us to hope that he is the Son of Man, above all other men, the Son of Man prophesied by Daniel, who will descend from Heaven, who is more than man, and who, more than all other men, is the Son of God! . . .”

Amongst the crowd was a proselyte, a Greek from Alexandria called Euphorbius, who now said quietly:

“Verily, the Jesus who performs such miracles is more than a son of man, more than a son of God—he is a god!”

“A god!” groaned Doeg. “I crossed the sea to convert you, and this is all you retain of my teaching! I have explained to you a hundred times that our God,

the God of Israel, is the creator of heaven and earth, and that He is not manifest in wood, stone, bronze, or flesh and blood ! I have told you a hundred times that He is neither here or there, but everywhere, invisible, infinite, eternal, and that, as the infinite can never be finite, He does not walk the earth in man's shape like your Zeus, Ares and Poseidon ! ”

Unmoved, the Greek replied :

“ But if Zeus, Ares and Poseidon, lesser gods though they be, are yet powerful enough to assume any shape at will, why should not the God of Israel, that mighty God who created heaven and earth, make Himself small, if it seems good to Him, and take on the shape of man ? ”

At these words, Doeg could control himself no longer ; he advanced on us with clenched fists, and shouted :

“ Now you see to what a pitch he has led you—your *Son of God* ! ”

In short, the disciple of Schammai was mistrustful of the *Son of Man*, and being mistrustful of the *Son of Man*, was also mistrustful of his miracles.

But I had no mind to question and doubt him in the new joy of using my limbs. I came and went, strode up and down, and to and fro ; I never paused, but walked tirelessly in the courtyard. . . . I little thought a time would come when I should long to stand still ! . . .

The man had arisen abruptly as he uttered the last words. I saw his robe brush against the column in the wall that separated us from the Martyrium as he hastened in pursuit of his shadow that fled before him across the square. As if they had been wound up by an invisible spring, his legs mechanically carried him three times round the white dome beneath which the wood of the cross is buried. Then, as if he had utterly forgotten me, or as if I had never even existed, he strode past me with unseeing eyes, and hurried with frantic steps down the path by which we had ascended.

CHAPTER V

His footsteps echoed on the stones. I stood there stupidly. Had I really seen this man? Had he really spoken to me? Suddenly, my lips formed words:

"If he were to elude me . . ."

And mechanically, as mechanically as his legs had carried him round the dome, my own now drew me towards those receding footsteps that died away in silence.

Whither had he gone? How should I find him?

I no longer wondered whether he were a madman. Reason had deserted me, giving place to an overmastering desire—the desire to hear him speak again . . . I began to run . . . I ran frenziedly . . . past the façade of the Basilica . . . the arch of the Ecce Homo . . . past the door that opened on nothingness. . . .

On the brink of the abyss I faltered. The Kedron flowed darkly. Not a sound was to be heard. Opposite, on the hillside, the golden spheres of the Russian Chapel gleamed like silver, and, keeping watch over the valley of tombs, the slender spire rose above the fretted roof like a taper kindled by moonlight. . . .

"I shall never find him! I shall never know anything more!"

Then, from the dark depths, there emerged a dark figure. In silence, it toiled up the steep slope towards the further bank.

I dashed forward, crossed the bridge, and tried, in my confusion, to find my bearings.

"The Virgin's Tomb . . . the path that winds upwards between two walls . . . olive-trees. . . . Has he gone to the Convent of Pater Noster, or the Crypt of the Credo? . . . No, now I can see him over there to the left. . . . He is on the summit . . . he is going towards Mount Scopus!"

I was nearing—the Zionist University! . . . The Einstein

*Institute of Mathematics ! . . . The Einstein Institute of Physics !
 . . . the open-air amphitheatre ! . . .*

I found him seated on a ledge. He was gazing at the distant hills of Moab, at the mist where, not so far away, the Dead Sea showed faintly blue, and at the confused violet mass of Jericho.

I sat down beside him.

"I want to hear the end of the story," I said.

You will come to an end before the story ! *he jeered.* The story has endured for two thousand years—in another two thousand years, it will begin all over again ! . . . You had better choose the passages in it that interest you the most ! Ask me any questions you like, and I will answer them ! An interview with the Wandering Jew—how does that appeal to you ? . . .

.

I was tongue-tied at first. He scrutinised me slyly. At length I made up my mind :

"Describe him to me."

Describe whom ?

"Jesus—his face, his bearing . . ."

I expected that ! You read everything, my poor, dear man. You've read Monsieur Eisler who claims to have discovered a description of him ! . . . Was Jesus short and deformed ? Was he dark-skinned with a long face and a long nose ? Had he a scanty beard and equally scanty hair ? Did his brows meet above wild eyes ? Did the people of Nazareth cry to him : "Physician, heal thyself !" because he was infirm ? Had he, who desired to take on himself the sin of the world, taken on its vile aspect—in itself a deadly sin ? . . . Possibly yes, possibly *che no*, as you say in Italian, if you speak Italian. In any case, I know nothing about it !

"You ? Who saw ?"

I could, were I asked, tell you that Simon called Peter

was thick-set, square-built, and sturdy as a rock ; that his expression was child-like, that he was prematurely bald, and that he stank of fish and sweat ; that Jacob and Jokanaan, otherwise James and John, the sons of Zebedee, both had curls, although James had a pointed beard, whereas John was clean-shaven. . . . But Jesus ! . . . Suppose you had known someone for twenty months, and that subsequently, for a period of twenty years, you were shown twenty portraits of him daily, none of which was like him—would you be able to remember what he really *was* like ? Well, for twenty centuries, I have been shown hundreds and thousands of Christs—slender Christs on mosaics ; golden-haired Christs with golden haloes ; Christs in the guise of Jupiter and Adonis ; Flemish, Italian, Spanish, Auvergnese and Bantu Christs ; plaster, marble, and margarine Christs—all Goys ! How can I possibly retain a clear image of the Jew whom I myself met nineteen hundred odd years ago ? Besides, I was never able to look at him ! . . . That is actual fact, my dear sir—no one could look at him ! You must have noticed that his eyes alone are mentioned in the gospels. His eyes blinded you to the rest of his face—you could see nothing else ! You could not even tell what shape or colour they were ! No . . . but in their utmost depths . . . infinitely remote . . . there was something which drew you, held you . . . something so tremendous that after a second you lost all sensation of sight. . . . See, I am trembling yet. . . . Speak of other things, or let us make an end !

.

He rose. I caught him by the arm. It took me some time to quieten his troubled spirit, by whose tremors I too had been shaken. I cast about for a fresh question, and hesitated.

“ After you had been healed, what did you believe ? ” I

hazarded at last. "Did you believe that the Kingdom of Heaven would come immediately?"

He again seated himself, and said dreamily:

The Kingdom of Heaven! Ah, we all believed it would come at any moment! . . . When I had been healed, Uncle Simeon wanted to go home so that the rest of the family might see the miracle. But Aunt Sephora objected anxiously:

"Suppose the Kingdom of Heaven were to come in the meantime! We must be here to see it happen!"

And I thought:

"What does my own little personal salvation matter to those who will so soon behold the salvation of the whole world?"

Baruch, too, agreed that it would be better to dispatch a messenger to tell the others to come and join us.

"We will pass the last days that remain to us in repentance," said Reuben. "And listen to the teachings of the Master that we may be better prepared for the wonder that will change the world."

"We must never neglect learning!" wound up Uncle Simeon with a smile.

.

So while we awaited the Kingdom, we followed Jesus—my aunt and uncle on the two asses, Baruch, Reuben and myself on foot. We crossed mountain and plains, slept in our tent, ate chance meals, or went hungry. We were a motley gathering: there were spies from Jerusalem, creatures in the pay of Caiaphas and Antipas: Sadducees, Pharisees who were hostile like Doeg, proselytes, toll-gatherers and harlots. There was a host of sick and poor, but there were prosperous followers, too, such as Lazarus of Bethany with his sisters, Martha and Mary, and members of the Sanhedrin such as Nicodemus

and Joseph of Arimathea. There were even a few who were purely and simply snobs, for in spite of what you may think, my dear sir, snobs are not a fresh product of the twentieth century ! No, they already existed ! What else could you expect ? The Galilean was the fashion that winter, and it was the thing for the well-to-do to invite him to dine !

But, as you can imagine, I did not venture near these dazzling beings ! A yawning gulf separated me from the apostles and disciples ! As for Jesus who had healed me, I did not even know if he recognised me, and though my gratitude urged me to him, sooner than have approached him I would have sunk into the earth !

Judas, whom we had encountered, had no such scruples ; he was here, there and everywhere, bursting with importance. He it was who proclaimed in the various towns, hamlets and synagogues that the Master was on his way ; he who arranged for our accommodation at inns, took charge of the commissariat, rounded up the hangers-on, and marshalled the sick in orderly groups. He acted as impresario, in fact, and kept accounts of all expenditure, which he handed in to Joanna, who subsidised the tours and who was no less a person than the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward. From afar, he shouted to us :

“ Did I not tell you ? The writings are being fulfilled ! It is written : ‘ *The armies shall come and spread the Abomination of Desolation !* ’ and Pilate's armies have marched through the land, and set up the image of Cæsar on the mount of the Temple ! It is written : ‘ *Behold, I will send you Elijah, the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord* ’ ; and Elijah has returned to us in the guise of John the Baptist ! It is written : ‘ *But thou, Bethlehem, little amongst the thousands of Judæa, out of thee shall come forth he that is to be ruler in Israel* ’ : and Jesus

came forth from Bethlehem ! It is written : ‘ *The land of Zebulon and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles ; the people which sat in darkness saw a great light* ’ ; and the light of Jesus is rising in Galilee ! ”

“ How lucky he is to be chosen as one of the Twelve,” I thought. “ How did he win the Master’s confidence so soon ? ”

But a minute after, I said to myself : “ Am I going to envy Judas because he has Jesus, just as I envied my cousins because they had the Torah ? If I continue in my sin, I shall never enter into the Kingdom ! ”

.

The Kingdom ! Jesus spoke of it, but I could not really understand.

“ The Kingdom of Heaven,” he said, “ is like unto a treasure hidden in a field, the which when a man hath found, he selleth all he hath, and buyeth that field.”

“ Then you can buy the Kingdom—how can you buy it ? ” I wondered.

Again :

“ The Kingdom of Heaven is like a grain of mustard, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth ; but when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches, so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadows of it.”

“ Does he mean that the Kingdom will be slow in coming ? ” I thought. “ How long will it take to come ? ”

On another day, he said :

“ It is like unto a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to

watch. Watch ye, therefore, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning ; lest coming suddenly he finds you sleeping."

"The Kingdom will come unexpectedly," I concluded.

Yet :

"The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say : Lo here ! or Lo there ! For behold, the Kingdom of God is within you."

"Why are we still waiting if the Kingdom has already come ? " I told myself in bewilderment.

I was so troubled by all these sayings that I sought an explanation from Judas.

"Why does he speak in parables ? " I asked. "We should understand him better if he used simpler speech."

"If he used simpler speech everyone would understand him," said Judas.

"Does he not mean everyone to understand him ? "

"Ah no ! . . ."

"Why ? "

"So that the Writings may be fulfilled ! To us, his apostles, the Master said : ' It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not given. Thus I speak to them in parables, for in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias who saith : *By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand, and seeing, ye shall see, and shall not perceive, lest at any time ye should see with your eyes and hear with your ears and should be converted.* . . . For he that hath, to him shall be given ; and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.' "

"Does Jesus only desire the Kingdom to come for the righteous ? " I thought. "Is he less generous than Uncle Simeon who petitions : ' Reveal the glory of Thy power,

O Lord, our God, in our days. Judge the earth with equity in Thy might. Let all men know and learn that every knee must be bended to Thee, and every nation must testify in Thy Name. Let all men know and learn that they must accept the yoke of Thy Kingliness, for thus it is written : *Throughout the earth, God shall be King, and in that day, God shall be One, and One shall be the name of God.* . . . Is gentle Jesus less gentle than Uncle Simeon ? Oh no—Judas must be wrong—he must have misunderstood, or perhaps he is trying to magnify himself in my sight by boasting of a secret that is hidden from me. . . . The mysteries of the Kingdom ! What need is there of mysteries ? ”

Sometimes, so that I might learn more, I tried to hear what the apostles were saying.

Thomas made his doubts manifest : “ Suppose His Kingdom never comes ? ”

Peter was troubled : “ Suppose we have left all to gain nothing ? ”

Philip said : “ John the Baptist made far fewer promises ! ”

James cried angrily : “ I am a patient man, but even my patience has limits ! ”

Andrew sighed : “ If only we could understand what he says ! But his words trickle from us like water ! ”

“ And when he explains his parables,” added Thaddeus, “ what fish do we find to fill our nets ? ”

“ Have they no more understanding than I ? ” I thought. “ Why has the Master chosen them ? ”

As yet, you see, I had not heard of the doctrine of Grace ! Nor has it been expounded to me since then by their Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Calvin, Jansen, or your Pascal : despite my little travels, I have not greatly frequented such society ! Nevertheless, I have a fairly

comprehensive idea of what they mean by Grace. Need I particularise ? It embarrasses me somewhat, even though they bestow it on our patriarchs. It seems to me that all mankind should be in a state of Grace ! God willed otherwise, however : more's the pity !

.

The Kingdom of Heaven was still somewhat obscure to me, but there were times when all became crystal-clear.

We had halted beside a lake where cattle were grazing, as they still do to-day, amongst the oleanders, at the foot of those emerald-green hills that you think so beautiful, and on the hilltop from which the snowy summit of Mount Hermon is visible in the far distance. We sat down cross-legged on the grass, and he climbed on a rock to speak to us.

He was so friendly, so unaffected as he uttered his favourite opening : " Verily, I say unto you," in the faint Galilean accent that made him slur his gutturals.

At first, we tried to look at him. Oh, he had none of those exquisitely draped poses in which he is portrayed in your pictures, none of that majesty with which your actors invest him ! No, he bore himself like one of the people, his gestures were the gestures of a Jew ! . . . But all at once we were aware of his eyes ! Wherever we stood, to right or left of him, or face to face with him, each one of us felt that his gaze was directly upon us. Our sight grew confused. It was as if, standing on the rock, he had suddenly surrounded himself with light ; and his words were winged lights that fluttered against our brows, and cheeks, and lips . . . irradiated our very hearts !

Ah, how translucent his parables seemed to me at such moments ! In spite of the resemblance between

them, I utterly forgot Uncle Simeon's *maschals*. I thought I saw the seed spring up as the sower spoke, and the lilies of the field array themselves in all their glory, like Solomon. I heard the wicked judge render justice to the importunate widow and the rich man praise his unjust steward. The Good Samaritan poured out oil and wine for me, and the Prodigal Son invited me to feast on the fatted calf ! All things round me grew care-free and joyful ! The whole world was transformed, and I with it. "Repent ye, repent ye, for the Kingdom of God is at hand !" How could we forbear from repentance ? The reward was there—the reward was within our reach !

But Uncle Simeon, although he was as moved as I, endeavoured to break the enchantment which vexed him a little. He said, as years later your Claude Montefiore was to say :

"I admire the Good Samaritan ! How lovingly he helped the poor wretch from whom the Levite and the priest had turned aside, how tenderly he bound up his wounds, and set him upon his own ass, brought him to an inn, and paid the host in advance to care for him ! But what if the Good Samaritan had arrived three hours earlier just as the thieves had set upon the wayfarer, stripped him, and wounded him ? Would he have folded his arms in accordance with the Master's command : 'Resist not evil' ?—I have an equal admiration for the father of the Prodigal Son, in honour of whose return he killed the fatted calf. But had his brother no cause for complaint ? During the whole of his life, he had not transgressed, nor had he killed a solitary kid to make merry with his friends. Yet the Prodigal Son, who had devoured his father's living with harlots, was more cherished than if he had never left home ! 'Great is repentance !' said our Elders ; and there is more joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over a just

person which needs no repentance . . . that is all very well in Heaven but how could such things be on earth ? Is it wise to belittle righteousness ? Must the sinner not only be forgiven, but favoured ? Our God is a merciful God, but He is also a just God. His scales are balanced between mercy and justice. For, unless He were merciful, what would become of the sinner ? But, unless He were just, what would become of the world ? ”

Thus reasoned my Uncle Simeon. Meanwhile, I listened to Jesus. He was reciting *Our Father* !

How ready I was then to follow in all things the will of that Father whom I felt was in Heaven, so that I might enter the Kingdom ! How easy it seemed to do unto others as I would have them do unto me, to give to him that had taken away from me, more than he had taken away from me, and to forgive, not seven times, but until seventy times seven ! Why should I take any care of the morrow ? Were not the very hairs of my head numbered ? I had no need of long drawn-out prayers, no need of any prayers. Faith and hope were all in all. God knew better than I what I would have asked Him, and I would obtain it unasked.

Was the yoke of the Torah superfluous, the yoke that had paralysed me though I had never borne it ? Now that my body had been set free, my soul was no longer captive : it ran and danced and put forth wings ! . . .

“ Behold the Kingdom ! The Kingdom of God is within me ! ” I murmured.

CHAPTER VI

There was a moment's silence. Was he waiting for me to ask another question? . . .

"This Kingdom within you—did it satisfy you? Did it satisfy the others?"

No, of course not. We were waiting for something more, something outside ourselves! We felt that a Kingdom required a King—that not until Jesus was a King would he be a Messiah! According to Baruch the Zealot, Jesus only did what he did in order to become a King! Yes, Baruch said to me:

"Have you noticed all our marches and counter-marches? There have been wandering Rabbis before now—but this everlasting flight! Yes, the Master is fleeing. Can't you guess why? Time after time he leads us close to the frontier between the two tetrarchies! Suddenly, an alarm is sounded—the boundary-line has been crossed! Why do you think he speaks to the people from a ship? Is it because he wishes to set a distance between himself and the crowd who press on him, and sometimes prevent him from eating, or because a few strokes of the oars and a favourable breeze will carry him to safety on the further shore? . . . Does he forbid us to speak of his miracles for no other reason than humility? Does he refuse to perform them because he is weary, because he himself suffers after he has healed the sick, or because he desires us to believe in him without signs and portents? Why does he forbid us to call him the Messiah? Why so much circumspection? Is it not because he dreads his fame to go abroad, and is mindful to wait till all is in readiness?"

“Till all is in readiness?” queried Reuben.

“The Twelve whom he sends forth, two by two, to the *lost sheep of Israel*,” continued Baruch. “And the Seventy whom he dispatches, I know not where—with what message are they entrusted?”

“With a message of peace,” said Reuben. “They have taken with them at his behest, neither gold nor silver nor brass in their purses, nor scrip for their journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves. They are sent to bring the Gospel.”

“But why are the Twelve forbidden to go amongst the Gentiles, or into any city of Samaria?”

“The Seventy may go wheresoever they will!”

“What of the threats to the cities that will not receive them? Why should they not be received? Is the Gospel so dangerous?”

“Dangerous? He said to them: ‘Be ye harmless as doves.’”

“But he also said to them: ‘Be wise as serpents!’ He himself sets them an example of wisdom! He scarcely ventures into the towns, but remains on the outskirts. At times, he suddenly disappears!”

“He goes into the wilderness to pray!”

“Is there none but God in the wilderness? Do you not know that ever since Hezekiah the Galilean, Athronga the shepherd, Simon of Peræa, and Judah the Gaulanite, all of whom revolted against Rome, the Zealots, their followers, have hidden themselves in the mountain caves, ready to rise again? They are called outlaws, bandits and brigands, because they refuse to pay tribute to Rome, and will serve none other than God. How do you know he is not holding council with them?”

“Jesus?”

“Must not the Messiah accomplish their design?”

He must proclaim himself King and drive out Pilate and the two Herods, his allies ! ”

“ Jesus in league with reckless insurgents ? ”

“ Oh, he is gentle,” said Baruch. “ But Moses was gentle ; yet he slew the Egyptian. Phineas was gentle ; yet he slew the Canaanite woman. Mattathias was gentle ; yet he slew the Syrian. And the Holy One, blessed be His name, is gentle ; yet He hurled Pharaoh with his thousands and tens of thousands to the depths of the sea ! He blessed David’s sling, Jehu’s bow, and the axes of the Maccabees ! ”

“ But the Holy One will not crown His Messiah until the day appointed by Himself,” protested Reuben. “ And if men attempt to hasten the miracle by force, He will delay it to the end of the world ! ”

“ The end of the world is at hand ! ” cried Baruch. “ The Kingdom has been announced : men must begin what God will complete ! ”

“ Men must begin—yes,” exclaimed Reuben. “ But they must begin by repenting ! ”

Baruch was beside himself.

“ Do you think the Romans will be wiped out by repentance alone ? ” he shouted. “ Why, if Jesus seeks nothing more than repentance, has he made Simon the Zealot an apostle ? And why, if Jesus seeks nothing more than repentance, does Simon the Zealot follow him wherever he goes ? No, our God is no woman : He is a warrior—merciful, I grant—but, nevertheless, a warrior ! He girds His Messiah with pity, but arms him with a sword, so that Israel may reign over the peoples, and His justice prevail amongst the nations ! ”

Thus the two brothers argued. I could not make up my mind which of them was right : reason inclined me to Baruch, my heart to Reuben. With a smile, Uncle Simeon, who was listening, restored peace between them.

“ Stop quarrelling about the Messiah, my sons,” he said, “ or you will drive him from us ere he has come ! ”

.

One day—Jesus had healed the deaf, dumb, blind and demoniac—there was great excitement in the crowd : two disciples of the Baptist had arrived from Machærus where Herod Antipas had imprisoned him. I caught sight of them talking to the Master beneath a sycamore-tree. What were they saying to him ?

“ They are asking him on behalf of John : ‘ Art thou he that should come, or look we for another ? ’ ” ran from lip to lip.

“ John evidently does not know,” remarked my uncle slyly. “ Yet he saw the dove that descended on his forehead on the morning of his baptism, and heard the voice from Heaven that cried : ‘ This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.’ Has John forgotten these things ? ”

“ He is in prison—his memory grows dim,” said Aunt Sephora. “ He is losing heart, and needs to be reassured.”

“ And what does Jesus reply ? ”

“ He replies : ‘ Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see. The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them.’ ”

“ The answer is incomplete ! ” observed Uncle Simeon, stroking his beard.

“ And I know why ! ” exclaimed Baruch, rubbing his hands together. “ The Messiah must not yet proclaim himself ! ”

“ Has he not made answer enough ? ” protested Aunt Sephora. “ If the blind see, the lame walk, lepers are

cleansed and the dead raised up, the Messiah must be amongst us, and the Kingdom has begun ! ”

“ Wait ! ” murmured Baruch.

“ Wait ! ” murmured Reuben.

“ With time and patience the leaf of the mulberry-tree will change to silk ! ” as you say in Chinese, if you speak Chinese . . . but I am waiting still ! . . .

.

When the messengers of John had gone their way, Jesus praised the Baptist somewhat strangely ! We were standing rather far back, and I could not hear very clearly. He called John a prophet and more than a prophet. He said that among those born of woman there was none greater than John, but that he who was least in the Kingdom would be greater than he. At one moment, he spoke of the Kingdom taken by violence.

“ Do you hear ? ” exclaimed Baruch. “ He says we must take the Kingdom by force ! ”

“ He did not say so ! ” cried Reuben.

“ He did say so ! He said : ‘ All the prophets prophesied until John. Now the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. ’ ”

“ He did not say *now*. He said : ‘ *Until now* ! ’ ”

“ He said *now* ! I heard him ! ”

And Baruch exulted.

A few days later, the apostles and disciples who had been sent forth by Jesus returned again with joy. They had healed the sick, cast out many devils, and preached that men should repent.

“ They do not tell us everything,” said Baruch with a knowing look. “ During their absence, the Master saw

Satan fall like lightning from Heaven. They must have given the sign. The hour is at hand ! ”

“ What sign ? ” I thought. “ Am I going to learn the secret of the Kingdom ? ” And not without envy, I watched Baruch with Simon Zelotes who had become his friend. They would stroll up and down for hours on end.

Were they speaking of the secret ? Oh, how I wished I knew !

Sometimes they would disappear together for two or three days. When they returned, Baruch was wrapped in mystery.

Had they been into the mountains to hold council with the Zealots ? What were they premeditating ? What had they planned ?

.

Shortly afterwards, Jesus set sail with his apostles and certain of his disciples across the lake. We walked along the shore to meet him when he landed.

His teaching seemed to me to have grown harsher. Perhaps, from the first, I had been aware of this streak of severity. . . . It was strange. The Master would seem so close to us, yet suddenly he was infinitely remote, lost to us in frozen distances. How could he be so near to us, and yet so immeasurably out of reach ?

At a certain village, a man said to him :

“ Lord, I will follow thee, but let me first go bid them farewell at home.”

And he, in that far-off voice, replied :

“ No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God.”

Another wished to bury his father. It was not so untoward a request, was it ? Yet Jesus said icily :

“ Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the Kingdom of God.”

To a third who had entreated him with all civility to divide his inheritance between his brother and himself, he answered, as though he were being made to descend from the heights :

“ Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you ? ”

Again, a rich youth came to him, and asked :

“ What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life ? ”

“ Thou knowest the commandments,” Jesus made reply. “ Thou shalt not commit adultery ; thou shalt not slay ; thou shalt not steal ; thou shalt not bear false witness ; honour thy father and thy mother . . . ”

“ All these things I have kept from my youth,” broke in the young man.

“ There is one thing more,” said Jesus. “ Sell that thou hast, give to the poor, and follow me.”

But when the young man heard this, he went away sorrowfully, for he had great possessions. Whereupon Jesus told us the story of the poor man who lay in Abraham’s bosom after his death, and of the rich man who looked up to him from Gehenna, and wept. Then, in that remote voice that sundered him from the world, he added :

“ Verily I say unto you that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God. No man can serve two masters : God and Mammon. Therefore, unless you give all that you have, you cannot serve me.”

I, who had nothing, listened quietly. But what of Uncle Simeon who, although he gave the tenth part of all he earned, in accordance with the Torah, yet put certain small sums away ?

We walked along and as we walked he remarked :

“ Those who do not go before the judge for settlement of their inheritance do well ; but were there no

judges, would all matters be settled ? Those who leave the spinning-wheel and the plough, sell their goods and give all they have to the poor, do even better ! But if all men impoverished themselves, what would become of the poor ? What would become of Jesus himself and his apostles, how would they preach the Gospel if they were not helped by Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Susannah, and others ? And man—what would become of man without the work of man ? Consider the lilies of the field : they toil not, neither do they spin, as we know, nevertheless, they flower. Look at the birds of the air : they sow not, neither do they reap ; they have neither store-house nor granary, yet they are fed by our Father who is in Heaven. But to man He said : ‘ *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread* ’ : for man is neither a lily nor a bird. Man is man, and unless he does the work of man, he is less than the beasts. ‘ *Great is Poverty,*’ said our Elders. ‘ *It becometh the Daughter of Israel, as a knot of scarlet in the mane of a white steed.*’ Yes, poverty is great—but not degradation ! Wherefore our Elders toiled with their hands, for they also said : ‘ *He who does not teach his son to labour teaches him to steal,*’ and : ‘ *It is better to work, even on the Sabbath, than to beg for bread.*’ ”

“ But of what account are judges and lawsuits, riches and poverty, spinning-wheels and ploughshares if this world must come to an end ? ” protested Reuben.

“ What if it should not come to an end ? ” said Uncle Simeon.

.

We had joined Jesus on the further shore, near Bethsaida. We were now climbing the mountain. Simon Zelotes was in front.

For many hours, we journeyed on the heights. When we looked down, we could see an endless procession that

came from all the towns and villages as far as the eye could see, and which was winding its way up to us.

“The real meaning of the Rabbi’s words has not dawned on you,” said Baruch with a sprightly air. “It is not because he is going to lead us to Heaven this very night that he orders us to bid farewell to our meadows and homesteads, and says : ‘Leave all thou hast, and follow me.’ He desires us, in the first place, to follow him into the wilderness where no man sows or reaps, toils or spins, where the Torah was given to us, where Moses beheld God face to face, and where there is no Herod and no Cæsar. There, the Maccabees sharpened their axes against the Syrians ! There, the Zealots await our coming, to deliver Israel from bondage, and to drive out the Romans !”

Reuben shrugged his shoulders, my uncle smiled, and I thought :

“It might be possible . . .”

.

We had journeyed for two whole days, and were still on the march.

“Whither does he lead us ?” voices began to murmur.

Our provisions had long ago come to an end. We were hungry. Some of the women wept, and children sobbed. Many of the men cried :

“Let us go back !”

“The very like of those who bewailed the flesh-pots of Egypt !” stormed Baruch in disgust.

“Yes, but Moses gave them manna !” remarked Uncle Simeon. “What will Jesus give us ?”

“With faith, all things are possible,” said Reuben. “For so has the Master taught us. If he said to this mountain : ‘Remove hence to yonder place,’ it would remove !”

“Why not?” I thought.

.

We had come to a kind of arena formed by grassy slopes. We numbered four thousand, possibly five thousand, not counting the women and children. Facing us, Jesus stood on the mount, and preached. He preached on prayer.

“Ask, and it shall be given you,” he said. “Seek, and ye shall find. Knock, and it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? If he asks a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give good gifts to them that ask it?”

“Let him give them to us now!” muttered Doeg who had grumbled throughout the journey. “We are all dying of hunger!”

Indeed, the others had gone hungry like ourselves for three days. The apostles came and went uneasily, saying amongst themselves:

“Shall we send them away? Yet how shall we send them away fasting? They will faint by the wayside. Shall we go and buy bread for them? The villages are far distant, and where shall we find money?”

Evening was falling. Judas, the leading light of the commissariat, went up to the Master, consulted him, and despairingly displayed five loaves and two fishes. The rumour spread like wildfire that nothing else remained.

Now Jesus was speaking quietly to him. What was he saying?

We were made to sit on the grass in squares of fifty and a hundred. The disciples took our empty baskets.

Jesus was still standing on the mount, John on his

right, Peter on his left. In front of him were the five loaves and two fishes ; behind him, the sinking sun.

I seem to be there again. The loaves are stacked up, the fishes are laid on wide leaves. Jesus holds the first loaf high above his head, and I hear every word of the blessing he utters :

“Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, who maketh the corn to spring up from the earth.”

He breaks the first loaf, divides the first fish, and lays a morsel of fish on each morsel of bread ; Peter fills the first basket ; James carries it to a group of Samaritans who snatch at the portions.

Now he has broken up the second loaf, divided the remainder of the first fish. Baskets are handed down, and emptied.

And now he has taken the fifth loaf, and all that is left of the second fish. From where we sit, we all count the portions, every eye is fixed on the basket.

“The last ! Will it be for us ? ”

I watched with feverish anxiety, I admit, for I already rejoiced—*oumberschrié*,¹ as you say in Alsatian Hebrew, if you speak Alsatian Hebrew—in an exceedingly healthy appetite, whose capacity has since increased, notwithstanding the years, on account of the walking-exercise in which I indulge ! Reuben, Baruch, my aunt, my uncle, and Doeg—who looked more sallow than ever—were all equally hungry. We stared at the basket. It was being carried in our direction—no, it was being borne away ! It was not for us !

And then, Monsieur Fleg—I regret having to tax your intelligence—something happened that you will not understand. For that matter, I myself, after a lapse of two thousand years, still fail to understand.

Jesus continued to divide the second fish, break up

¹ Without boasting !

the fifth loaf. Baskets were filled. Jaws worked eagerly. Jesus crumbled the loaf, shared out the fish, and still neither came to an end. The second fish was still there ! The fifth loaf was still before him ! And, forgetful of their empty bellies, the groups of fifties and hundreds, the entire multitude, arose, jostled one another, went mad with joy, and shouted deliriously :

“ A miracle ! A miracle ! A miracle ! ”

. You find this miracle somewhat disturbing, don't you ? You will admit the cures, if you are pressed. Yes, exactly as you admit the cures at Lourdes : hysteria, Charcot, Bernheim, the school of Nancy—I know the theory ! But when I think of five thousand men—let alone their families, and at that time we did not need bounties to encourage large families !—when I think of five thousand men being fed on five loaves and two fishes, I myself am disturbed ! A riddle that has no answer is invariably a trifle vexatious ! But deep down, far below the surface, what is there that we do understand ?

You plant a seed in the mould of the green window-box on your balcony : a month later, a nasturtium begins to sprout. You think you understand because each year you plant a seed, and each year the nasturtium puts forth tendrils. But between ourselves, how much do you really understand ? You call the everyday miracle *nature* ; but the unforeseen miracle you term a *miracle* ! Where does the difference lie ? I have sought it, I still seek it, but, in the long run, I (who am myself a miracle) accept the miracle ! . . . You don't agree with me ? You have another explanation to offer me ? What explanation ? . . . We need not be ridiculous ! A Jesus does not stoop to conjuring tricks ! Then what ? Sheer invention ? An allegory to illustrate the meaning of the Heavenly Bread, or the doctrine of the Holy

Eucharist ? I myself was there, I tell you ! I saw it with my own eyes ! The baskets were woven from maple-bark ! The bread was barley-bread ! The fish was grilled, and had a flavour of honey that I have never since tasted ! My cousin Reuben was too wonder-struck to swallow a crumb ! As for Doeg, who was gorging himself as if *Yom-Kippur*¹ had just come to an end, he mumbled with his mouth full :

“ A miracle, I grant you ! But what does it prove ? No miracle has ever proved anything ! ”

.

Nor were the miracles over for that evening ! The five thousand who had been fed still shouted praises to the Master. It was almost night when we saw shadowy figures in black cowls behind the mountain—figures that stretched forth their hands and arms to Jesus.

“ The Zealots ! The Zealots ! ” cried Baruch. “ They have come to crown him King ! ”

We watched the outstretched arms and hands draw nearer and nearer. . . . But where was Jesus ? He had vanished !

Then Baruch flung himself on Simon Zelotes, and besieged him with questions. He threw up his arms, gestured wildly, and came back to us, shaking with anger.

“ I’m leaving ! ”

“ Where are you going ? ”

“ I’m going home ! If I meet the rest of the family on my way, I shall tell them not to trouble themselves further ! He refuses ! He wants the Kingdom to create itself unaided ! Is he afraid of being thrown into chains like John the Baptist ? Who dreams of making him a prisoner ? Who fears him ? No one interferes with his

¹ The Day of Atonement—The Great Fast.

speechifying ! To the poor he says : ‘ Blessed are the poor,’ so nothing need disturb the slumbers of the rich ! To the slave-driver he says : ‘ Toil for the Romans,’ so the Romans have no cause for complaint ! Did Moses lick the dust beneath Pharaoh’s sandals ? Did Elijah kiss Jezebel’s feet ? They were upright, their words were forthright ! Men knew what they meant ! What of John ? Did he fondle the bitch Herodias ? Is this dreamer, this waverer whose words elude us, and who eludes us behind his words, a Messiah ? A Messiah who dare not be King ? The Messiah of visionaries ! The Messiah of women ! You can keep your Messiah, Reuben ! . . . ”

That was how Baruch, the Zealot, left Jesus, the Galilean !

CHAPTER VII

“Excellent !” I said, after a pause. “I can plainly see the gulf that yawned between the Master and a patriotic Jew ! . . . But King or no King, did the Kingdom still delay ? What did people believe ?”

They began to grow uneasy. Some said :

“Perhaps the Rabbi is no more than a Rabbi !”
and others : “At most, he is a prophet !”

“But what did you say ?”

I was quite unruffled. “He is the Messiah !” I thought.
“He must be the Messiah because he made me walk, even though I was paralysed at birth !”

“Yet you knew that the Kingdom had not come.”

Yes, but I wondered whether the wicked Pharisees prevented it from coming.

“The wicked Pharisees ?”

Yes, those of whom Jesus said : “They sit in the seat of Moses. All, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do ; but do not ye after their works, for they say and do not.” Those of whom Uncle Simeon, the good Pharisee, said : “Three things bring about the damnation of the world : the piety of fools, the cunning of the impious, and the hypocrisy of the Pharisee.”

If the hypocrisy of wicked Pharisees could damn the world, did it not also prevent the Kingdom coming ?

I listened to them, watched them. Abdias glided along on his long feet to maintain a dignified carriage : *Tefillin* as large as his hands were strapped round his forehead, and he glanced about him as much as to say : “Why do you not bow down to me ! Bow down to me,

forsooth ! ” Nahum was the first to reach the synagogue in order to secure the principal seat for himself ! Thebni informed everyone : “ I gave a hundred shekels to the poor this morning ! ” and Bathuel, to outdo him replied : “ I only gave fifty, but I converted two Gentiles, which tips the scales in my favour ! ” Gerson cooed like a turtle-dove as he enquired : “ Is there a single commandment that I have not kept ? ” and Salphaad brayed like an ass as he repeated : “ I have kept one commandment, *therefore* God owes me one reward ! ”

If only you could have heard their *pilpoul*,¹ Monsieur ! Sheer music !

“ ‘ *Thou shalt not write two letters of the alphabet on the Sabbath* ’ . . . but suppose I were to write one with my right hand, and one with my left hand ? . . . Or one on one page, and the other on another ? . . . Or one on this wall, and the other on that wall ? ”

“ It is said : ‘ *The cup of blessing shall be cleansed and rinsed with water.* ’ But must both the cleansing and the rinsing be done with water, or the rinsing only ? ”

“ ‘ *It is ordained that he who has partaken of unclean food must purify himself and trample his garment underfoot,* ’ But at what moment was the garment defiled ? . . . Was it when the unclean food entered our lips ? . . . Or when it entered our intestines ? . . . or was it not rather when it was expelled from our bowels ? ”

Judas, who knew all there was to be known—and more—concerning everyone, whispered to me :

“ Listen to the Righteous discriminating so scrupulously between what is lawful and what is unlawful ! Many of their sect are harmless, but these ! . . . Thebni reveres the Law—but sells his advice to any man who wishes to twist its meaning ! Salphaad condemns usury—but accepts small gifts of solid gold from each of his

¹ Dialectic quibbles.

debtors ! Gerson pays the shekels of the poor to the Temple—but makes them slave for him in return ! Nahum honours his father and mother—but in his heart of hearts, vows to God the money that he spends on food for them ! Abdias has married his sister-in-law to raise up sons to his dead brother in accordance with the Torah—but also raises up sons to the maid-servants of his living wife ! And Bathuel raises up sons to the daughters of Goyim because it is written : ‘ *Thou shalt love the stranger !* ’ ”

Naturally, all these Jesuits attacked Jesus.

“ When the Kingdom comes, God will punish them,” I told myself. “ And so they are trying to forestall Him ! That is why they are doing their utmost to prevent the Kingdom from coming by turning us against God’s Chosen ! ”

And it must have seemed a simple matter to them, for there were times when the Master shocked even the most faithful of his followers !

.

In the first place, there was the company he frequented. It was true that rich and poor, high and low, masters and slaves, men and women were all equal in the sight of God. But in actual fact, it was illicit to hold much converse with women—men were required to refrain from their own wives, and still more from the wives of others, for those who spent their time with women *neglected the Torah and drew down evil*. Now Jesus spoke often with women—with all kinds of women. In his eyes, they were the equal of men, not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of man. He pitied the greatest sinners amongst them, and treated them exactly as he treated their virtuous sisters. Even the least hypocritical would have uttered exclamations of disgust

had they judged the Master by the company he kept. What would you nice-minded people think to-day if you saw a priest seated in a bar, surrounded by swindlers, pimps and street-walkers? The nice-minded people of those days pulled long faces, and shuddered with repulsion. You know how Jesus answered them :

“ They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

Abdias reddened with indignation up to the very straps of his *tefillin*. But Uncle Simeon tugged at his beard, and said :

“ We visit those who are sick in body, not those who are sick in mind ; is this all that is required of us ? We pray for sinners, yet shun them ; is this true charity ? But Jesus turns to those who are abandoned of all men. Will God rebuke him if he leads them back to God ? ”

There was one woman, in particular, who scandalised the virtuous : Mary of Magdala, she whom you call Mary Magdalene. They rolled up the whites of their eyes as they repeated the gossip about her debauches, her house that reeked of scent and saturnalia, the fortunes that had been lavished on her by rich old lovers, and the handsome youths who had forgotten the Torah in a single kiss. One day, in company with two or three boon-companions, she had burst into loud laughter as she passed the Master. But suddenly her laughter had changed into bitter weeping.

“ Blessed be the breasts which gave you suck ! ” she had stammered, and he, not looking at her, had replied :

“ Blessed rather are they that hear the word of God and follow it ! ”

Then she, just as she was, clad in her diaphanous robe, had followed him. She had not ceased to follow him.

Nothing of her could be seen but her eyes above her veil—eyes so filled with love that they seared all who came near her like a flame.

“How can he allow her to show her eyes?” murmured the virtuous. “Who knows how many of the disciples they will blind?”

And sometimes, while Jesus spoke, the disciples who could not fix their gaze on him, let their looks dwell on Mary Magdalene.

A day soon came when not only the Master's companions, but his very appetite, aroused anger. The followers of the Baptist were ascetics. When they were not feeding on grasshoppers, they fasted by way of a change. In addition, many of the Pharisees, more strict than the Torah, imposed extra fasts on themselves in order to impress the less devout. An exhibition can be made of fasting, as of anything else! For that matter, are there not many Christians to-day to whom Christianity means no more than an exhibition of grief?

You ought to have seen what a fuss was made by those who fasted, over their dry tongues and pangs of hunger! They were no different from the Jews of your time who forgather at Kippur at the great synagogue in the Rue de La Victoire! Meanwhile, Jesus, in merry company, ate and drank shamelessly before their very eyes; and I need hardly tell you that healthy striplings like James and Peter did not say no to second helpings!

One day, Nahum and Thebni came, ostensibly to ask the Rabbi:

“Why do your disciples eat while we fast?”

“Can ye make the children of the bride-chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them?” he made answer.

“Do you hear that, Simeon?” said Doeg. “What have you to say to that?”

“Many things are forbidden to me by the Torah,” my uncle replied. “Do you desire there should be still more? Let us be blessed in associating God with the joys he bestows on us! He who deprives himself in this world of a sanctioned joy shall be deprived of a promised joy in the next!”

“But who is this bridegroom of whom he speaks?” pursued Doeg. “And what is this wedding?”

Timidly, Reuben proffered an explanation.

“If Jesus is the Messiah, is he not already on earth the Bridegroom of Israel at the Feast of the Righteous?”

“If he *is* the Messiah,” said Uncle Simeon, and his smile seemed expressive of hope.

“Is Uncle Simeon beginning to believe what Reuben believes, what my aunt believes, and what I myself believe?” I thought.

.

“On the whole, did your uncle defend Jesus?”

At that time, yes. And why shouldn't he have defended him? He said, as my uncle said: “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect.” Like my uncle, he revered the Torah. He even paid the half-shekel to the Temple! Did that show respect for the Law, or not? “Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so,” he taught, “he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. . . .” And long after his death, I myself saw his apostles and disciples practise the Torah as he had practised it, up to that day when Saul of Tarsus, whom you call Paul, thought himself justified in proclaiming wherever he went: “Sin springs from the Law: therefore, destroy the Law! . . .”

So the good Pharisees loved Jesus who was often taken to be a good Pharisee himself by the lowly ; and Jesus loved the good Pharisees, even as the people loved them.

Now who was a better Pharisee than my Uncle Simeon ? From the moment when he awoke, to the moment when he fell asleep, at home or abroad, seated at the table or before his leathers, in sickness and in health, while he made merry and while he mourned, he observed the Torah. The Masters—you call them Scribes—had planned everything so meticulously that there was enough and to spare for every second of the year, month, week and Sabbath. Thanks to which, according to the hour or season, I would see my uncle drape himself in his *talith*,¹ or put on sackcloth, kiss the blue fringes of his shawl, or rend his garments, light a lamp, or wave a palm. Did he meet a sage ? He would recite a blessing. Did he meet a fool ? He would recite another. There were blessings for old and young, rich and poor, for the first fig and the first grape, for rain, wind, sun and moon ! In short, the Torah bound him to this world and the next : it taught him how to act towards his brother—Jew or Gentile—towards his friend and his enemy, his debtor and his creditor, his father, his wife, his sons and his apprentices ; it even taught him how to treat his ass and how to treat his neighbour's ass !

But Uncle Simeon would have been greatly surprised if you had said to him : “ Your Law is a heavy yoke,” and would have instantly replied :

“ The more commandments there are, the more love there is ! ‘ *I delight in the Law : it rejoices my heart. . . .* ’ ”

For, since he dwelt with the Torah, he dwelt with God . . . and note this : however strict my uncle was with regard to the purity of his raiment and food, however scrupulously he avoided contact with the

¹ Praying-shawl.

unclean—no matter whether a stranger or a neighbour were the source—he had nevertheless adopted me, in spite of the fact that I myself was unclean, and rendered the Torah impotent because of my own impotence !

“Charity in itself is worth as much as the observance and practice of the Law,” he said.

Do you know it was none other than my Uncle Simeon who asked Jesus one day :

“Rabbi, what is the first commandment in the Torah ? and Jesus had answered him with two quotations from Moses :

“The first commandment is : ‘*Hear, oh Israel, the Lord thy God is one God, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy strength.*’ And the second is : ‘*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*’ There is none other commandment greater than these.”

That good Pharisee, my Uncle Simeon, had added :

“Yes, Rabbi, our God is one God. We must love Him with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength ; and to love our neighbour as ourselves is more than burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

Whereon, Jesus said to him :

“Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God ! ”

“If the good Pharisees are not far from the Kingdom of God,” I thought, “will they help God’s Chosen to confound the wicked Pharisees who prevent the coming of the Kingdom ? ”

CHAPTER VIII

“Were you right? Did the good Pharisees uphold Jesus?”

You shall see ! . . .

One Sabbath we were going through a cornfield. We were walking in single file, I remember. Not the slightest breath of wind rippled through the golden meadow. Jesus, who led us, did not pluck a single ear, neither did the apostles who followed him, nor Uncle Simeon, nor Aunt Sephora, nor myself, despite my appetite ! Although I was not particularly well versed in the Torah, I knew it was unlawful to work on the Sabbath, and that to pluck an ear of corn and to crush it in one's hand was work in some small measure. Some of the disciples were less scrupulous. I can still see them snatching at the wheat to left and right of them as they passed through it, crushing and eating it. . . . I would have liked to follow suit, but from the other side of the field, Abdias and Bathuel were loud in reproof :

“Why do thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the Sabbath Day?” they said.

Standing in the sunlight, the Master answered that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath ; that David, when he was hungry, had entered into the House of God before the eyes of the High Priest, and had eaten and shared the shew-bread with his companions.

“Have ye not read in the Law that on Sabbath days the priests in the Temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?” he continued, “But I say unto you that in this place there is one greater than the Temple. For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath Day !”

Dumbfounded, Abdias and Bathuel said no more. A

stunned silence invariably ensued after Jesus had spoken. Even Doeg's breath was taken away. But a quarter of an hour later, some distance away from the Master, he recovered his power of speech :

" Did you hear that, Simeon ? He compares the work of the priest in the Temple in the service of God with that of any chance comer who assuages his hunger ! . . . And who in this place is greater than the Temple ? The Nazarene ? Does his mere existence set the Torah at naught ? "

" If he is the Messiah," said Reuben, " must he not change it some day ? "

" Yes," murmured Uncle Simeon. " One day, the Messiah may change the Torah ! . . . When he has changed the world ! When the Kingdom has come ! But if the Kingdom is to come, all Israel must first observe the Torah. How could the Messiah bring about the Kingdom if he himself did not observe the Torah ? "

What exactly did Uncle Simeon mean ? Had he suddenly discovered that Jesus was changing the Torah ?

.

On another Sabbath, we were in the synagogue at Capernaum.

Amongst the crowd was a man with a withered hand. Abdias, Gerson and Nahum kept watch on the Master to see if he would heal on the Sabbath.

" Stand forth," Jesus said to this man, and looked straight at the three as though their thoughts were visible to him.

" Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath, or to do evil ? " he asked them. " To save life or to kill ? What man is there amongst you that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath Day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out ? How much, then, is a man better than a sheep ? "

He gazed from one to the other in anger, then, turning to the man, said :

“Stretch forth thine hand.”

Straightway, as he stretched out his withered hand, it relaxed and flushed with life ; it was a healthy hand ! . . . But as we came out, Doeg shrieked with fury :

“Speech no longer suffices him ! Now he sets an example ! He himself sins ! Where was the urgency ? Could not this man have waited until the morrow to be healed ? Yes, our Elders did say : ‘ *The Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath,*’ but if it is lawful to profane the Torah that a life may be saved, is it not better to suffer for one more day that the Torah may be preserved ? ”

I waited for Uncle Simeon to reply. And Aunt Sephora waited, too. But he tugged at his beard, looked away . . . and made no answer whatsoever !

“What has troubled him ? ” I said to my aunt. “Why delay, even for an hour, when there is good to be done ? ”

But Aunt Sephora was not reassured. The hypocrites muttered in a corner, and seemed to be plotting together. Thebni shook hands with the rest. Could he be going to Jerusalem to denounce Jesus ? My uncle frowned ; my aunt trembled, and suddenly turned pale. Some of the disciples—the disciples, do you hear ?—had left the Master and were following Thebni !

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On another occasion, divorce was under discussion. With a curl of his lip, Abdias, that pious fornicator, asked the Rabbi if it were lawful for a man to put away his wife.

In a ringing voice Jesus replied :

“Is it not written that they twain shall be one flesh ? Whom God hath joined, therefore, let no man put asunder ! ”

But Nahum objected that Moses sanctioned divorce, upon which Jesus said abruptly :

“ It was for the hardness of your hearts that Moses wrote you this precept. In the beginning, it was not thus.”

As you can quite understand, these words did not please Uncle Simeon.

“ What ! ” he exclaimed. “ Would Moses have undone what God had done ? If the Law of Moses is not the Law of God, what is the Torah ? ”

And Reuben had added timidly :

“ If those things are true of men and women, would it not be better to refrain from marriage ? ”

Whereupon the Master had uttered vague praise of those who had made themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven’s sake. . . .

My uncle was filled with dissatisfaction.

“ Can you foresee that His Kingdom will ever come, Reuben ? How should it come if men no longer exist ? *Increase and multiply* : the first commandment of all, given to all living creatures that creation may continue until that day when God is One, and the name of the One is God. Your Jesus disregards it, desires us to disregard it. But what would become of the world if man no longer existed ? What would become of God’s creation without man created in His image ? And what would become of Israel if there were no Torah ? ”

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I was utterly at a loss. Why must the Messiah be burdened with the Torah ? Why did the salvation of Israel depend on the Torah ? I had no knowledge of the Torah ! Jesus sufficed me. Had he not saved me ?

So ran my thoughts in those days. But I have seen so much since then, and as your La Fontaine (who wrote

Jewish stories unawares) puts it : " He who has seen much may remember much."

" How much do you remember ? "

It will surprise you to learn that forty years after these discussions took place, I found myself, as if by chance, in Jerusalem, during that never-to-be-forgotten summer when the gallant Romans set fire to the Temple. I can still see Titus with his breast-plate and purple cloak. He was making signs and shouting orders for the blaze to be extinguished ! But the legionaries were soldiers ; they were eager for promotion. Ah, how they flung the bodies on the altar ! Blood flowed in streams ! The Court of the Women was a scarlet sea—blood ran red beneath Solomon's Portico ! . . . the towers crumpled up like wisps of straw, and marble columns smoked like torches ! Fissures gaped in the mountain ! . . . And on that day, Monsieur Fleg, I remembered my uncle's words : " What will become of Israel if there is no Torah ? "

I remembered them again two centuries later, when I saw the delightful Constantine, the first of the Christian Emperors—who had amiably disposed of his son Crispus, and his wife, Fausta—bury the foundation stone of what had been Byzantium, with a golden trowel. Ah, what exquisite robes there were—stoles, chasubles, and dalmatics ! The whole world—what was then believed to be the whole world—was going to accept Christianity ! With the exception of the Jews—the Jews who alone had refused to acknowledge Cæsar and Rome as gods and now refused to acknowledge the God made visible in Three Persons ! . . . What would have become of them if there had been no Torah, the Torah which the disciples of Jesus had destroyed, and which the Jews had re-written in indelible ink on their parchment scrolls ?

And later, amidst Goths and Visigoths, Vandals and Huns, what would have become of them without the Torah? Like Uncle Simeon, they regulated their lives by the Torah, during each month of the year, each day of the month, and each minute of the day ! . . .

I went amongst them, and watched them. I entered their universities at Soura, and Pumbadita in Babylonia ; I visited the school of Moses ben Moses in Cordova, and that of Raschi at Troyes in Champagne. I prayed in their synagogues, ate before the doors of their palaces, or in the courtyards of their farms—in the days when they still possessed farms !—and worked by the hour in their shoe-making booths, weaving-sheds, and goldsmiths' shops.

What ground I covered, Monsieur ! I wandered down the ages from Tiberias to Justinian, from Mahomet to Luther, and from Tamerlaine to President Lebrun ! . . . It was I who foretold the eruption to Jacob, the Jew who was suffocated beneath the lava at Pompeii ! It was I who arranged matters for Isaac, the Jew whom Charlemagne sent on a mission to Haroun-al-Raschid ! It was I who made possible the conversion of the King of the Chozars and his heathen subjects for Joseph, the Jew who travelled to Russia to convert them ! It was I who collaborated with that Jew who translated Aristotle from Arabian into Latin for the benefit of the Christian philosophers ! . . . From the Cape at the very foot of Africa to the Orkneys at the very top of Scotland, from the inlets of Brittany to the Himalayas, from India as far as China—wherever I went, there were Jews ! When Christopher Columbus sailed on his voyage of discovery, I embarked on the second ship, and when we reached America, I thought : “ At last, I shall see a world where there are no Jews ! ” But I was wrong : when I set foot on the shore, they were already there—they had sailed

in the first ship ! . . . If there had been no Torah, what would have become of them all—what would have become of the Jews who were hunted down and persecuted wherever they went ?

“ What do they do ? Why do they exist ? Why have they survived ? ” I asked myself. “ Must Israel still endure ? Has it still some purpose to fulfil ? What purpose ? . . . How easy it would be : the sign of the cross, three drops of holy water, and the Jews would be like the rest of the world, and might lead peaceful lives in homes of their own ! Why do they remain obdurate ? Why do they persist in their refusal ? ”

Oh, many attempts were made to baptise me—as well as the others—more than a hundred attempts, as you can imagine, in the course of twenty centuries ! . . . At first, they kindly offered me a choice between baptism and the auto-da-fé. But I declined the water, and side-stepped the flames ! Nowadays, they approach me rather differently. “ Just as M. Jourdain is totally unaware that he writes prose, so you are a Christian unawares ! ” I am told. “ Consistent Judaism leads straight to Catholicism ! ” I can only imagine that this straight road has several bends in it, for in spite of the length of time I have been walking, I have not yet reached the end ! And guess what answer I give to the gentlemen who would like to convert me ? “ My good Christians, begin by being Christians yourselves ! When Christians are Christians, the Jews may become Christians too ! . . . ” In the meantime, do you know what I’m doing ? *I observe !*

“ *What do you observe ?* ”

The Torah.

“ *The entire Torah ?* ”

Exactly. Like Uncle Simeon, I observe all the commandments : in waking and in sleeping, in coming and

in going, in eating and in fasting, in praying and in speaking, etc., etc. ! . . .

“ *H'm !* ”

You sound displeased ?

“ *Yes . . . I dream of a Judaism that will be the very spirit of the prophets : the spirit of mercy, peace, and charity ; and of a day when all mankind will be one, like God. As for all the food regulations, what we may and may not eat, and all the minutiae of strict observance, I confess that . . .* ”

Seriously, my dear sir, do you believe that a people, a tribe, a human family—no matter how you describe Israel—can exist by precepts alone, however eloquent they may be ? Or that man can be led by *love* alone, as Jesus wished at times ? . . . Oh, if you could have seen what a transformation that gospel of love had suffered, only thirty years after his death ! Re-read St. Paul : the first Epistle to the Corinthians, Chapters 5 and 6 ! He will tell you about the *extortioners, drunkards, railers, fornicators, adulterers, and self-abusers* who invoked the Gospels, and said : “ *All is allowed us since there is no Law !* ” Did faith *justify* only to purify ? . . . So what did the Church do ? The Church simply drew up another Torah—yes, my dear sir, from the order of Mass to the rule of convents, from the casuistry of the confessional to the jurisdiction of the Holy Inquisition, and from the Greek of the first catechism down to the last encyclical letter !

“ *But . . .* ”

But what ?

“ *What about the Protestants ? They have no Torah, or, rather, their entire Torah is the Imitation of Christ !* ”

That too, is a sublime conception, I agree, and there are saints amongst the Protestants, as there are in every creed. But what would become of those who are not saints if there were no Civil Code, that state Torah ?

Men must have laws—the law of love is not enough for them. Seeing that we are Jews, when it comes to a choice of Torahs, why not ours that puts love into the Law itself?

“ Love—yes ! But it also includes the menu ! ”

Why shouldn't it include the menu ? Thanks to those who set them down in the Torah, Israel still lives and sees God ! ”

“ In fact, no ham, no Jews ! Take your choice ! ”

Have you no other alternative to offer me ? . . .

“ What about Zionism ? ”

Zionism ? Zionism is the miracle of miracles ! How joyfully I am prepared to plant an orange-grove at Ain Harod, or dredge up all the potash in the Dead Sea with my own hands ! . . . I was present at the first Congress at Basle in 1897 ! So you see . . . they were all there, from North, East, South and West ! In suits, robes, burnouses, tunics, and caftans—in boots, turkish slippers, moccasins and sandals—in fur and velvet caps, tarbooshes and top-hats. . . . Herzl¹ spoke ! I heard him ! . . . Ah, my dear sir, no other words had moved me to such a degree since those that had raised me from my pallet two thousand years ago ! “ If only it were true, if only the journey were over,” I thought. “ If only the Wandering Jew had reached the end of his wanderings ! . . . ”

For these everlasting changes are not particularly amusing ! From time to time, I long to settle down for one short century, and live like the rest of the world ! . . . But, as you see, I continue to walk ; at present, I have no right to stop, and I cannot yet visualise all of us to-morrow morning—or even to-morrow evening—gathered together, here, on the National Hearth, each man beneath his own vine or fig-tree ! . . . What next,

¹ The founder of political Zionism.

then ? The Torah ! The Torah ! My Uncle Simeon was right ! The entire Torah, with the *lean* and the *fat*, the ham we must not eat, the lobster we must not eat, etc., etc. !

“ *But . . .* ”

Answer me yes or no—must Israel endure for a task that reaches far beyond earthly limits, a task that links it to God ? And if Israel must endure, must the Torah endure—yes or no ? And would the Torah have endured for three thousand five hundred years if the Jews had eaten like Goyim ? You know it would never have survived. Enough ! . . .

Between ourselves, Monsieur, you would do well to follow my example to some extent ! You set aside half-an-hour every morning for the exercise of your muscles—and you cannot spare a minute for the Torah that exercises both body and soul !

“ *But when you live in Rome . . .* ”

It is inconvenient not to eat as the Romans do ! Was it any more convenient for me when I wandered over the world with only a few pence in my wallet ? Was it any more convenient for Chasdai ibn Schaprount who was vizier to the Caliph of Cordova ? Or for Lord Swaythling, who was one of Queen Victoria’s ministers ? Or for your *Baron*, friend of all the kings—those who still reign, and those who have lost their crowns ? Yet they adhered to the Law, as I adhere to it. . . . When you are invited to dinner with one of your film-stars, do you as much as taste the lobster-bisque that upsets your stomach ? No, you never even sip it ! You refrain for the sake of your digestion that is entirely your own concern, yet you cannot do as much for the life of Israel that is God’s concern ? Then hold your peace, don’t write another word ! And don’t tell me that Monsieur Fleg is a Jew !

CHAPTER IX

I did not know what reply to make. . . . I bit my lip, and he continued :

These were the conclusions I reached in later years. But in those days, what did the Torah mean to me? What did it mean to Jesus? What *was* the Torah? . . . Did he really believe that no jot or tittle must pass from it? . . . I am not God! I admit I do not know what Jesus thought! But in spite of what the Gospels relate, perhaps the Pharisees did not invariably question him out of sheer malice. As I look back, I realise it more clearly. They were seeking information—they wanted to know!

“ To know what? ”

As the Torah led to the Kingdom of Heaven, they had to make sure whether the Master was for or against it! The salvation of Israel, the salvation of the world might depend on the replies he made! . . . But instead of giving them the explanations they sought, he seemed to delight in discouraging their curiosity!

“ In what way? ”

It was extraordinary! Doeg might reiterate that Jesus had learnt nothing, would never learn anything, yet the Master disproved every charge against him with the *distinguo* of the best school! He quoted texts, my dear sir, reasoned, and deduced in the same manner as his adversaries, *from like to like* and *from small to great* and so forth. He dismissed them, abashed, refuted and humiliated. It all seemed as clear as daylight . . . but suddenly the realisation dawned on them that they had

understood nothing whatsoever ! . . . No, something escaped them, exceeded their comprehension—something that was above your head and mine, no doubt ! . . . But good or evil, the Pharisees had perception. Jesus himself may have had no thought of suppressing the Torah, but they sensed in him the Master of those who were so soon to suppress it altogether ! . . . And alas, they were determined to make him suffer for what they had sensed !

Our journeys had grown more and more devious. We went through Philip's territories, or through Decapolis, then hurriedly returned to Galilee ; as hurriedly, we quitted it. Hostility reared its ugly head at the Rabbi, who had become colder and sterner. At times, his voice was charged with menace ; he confused the good Pharisees with the bad, and cried :

“ Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy. Leave them be ! They are blind, and if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch ! ”

Yet he spoke with all his former gentleness to the poor. At the corner of a road, a man that was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, besought him with words that were no words. Jesus approached him tenderly, led him aside, put his fingers into his ears, and touched his tongue. Then he looked up to Heaven, and breathed “ Be opened ! ” and straightway, the man's ears were opened, the strings of his tongue were loosed, and he spoke as clearly as you or I !

Or perhaps a blind man, seated by the wayside, his begging-bowl in his hand, divined who was there, and implored : “ Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me ! ” The disciples rebuked him, and cried : “ Hold thy peace ! ” but Jesus chided them, drew near him

and asked : "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" "Lord, that I may receive my sight !" "Receive thy sight : thy faith has saved thee," Jesus replied, and the blind man saw.

At each of these healings—how can I express it?—it seemed to me that I too was being made whole again. I would see myself lying helpless on my pallet, then I would feel strength surging into my limbs, I would arise and walk. . . .

But Abdias and Nahum shrugged their shoulders as they exchanged sly smiles.

"How can a profaner of the Sabbath perform miracles ? "

"But he does perform miracles !" said Aunt Sephora. "Could he perform miracles if he were a sinner ? "

"Pharaoh's sorcerers changed serpents into rods as well as Moses," said Gerson. "Did they perform miracles ? "

"When the doctrine is false, the miracle is false," commented Bathuel, and Nahum concluded :

"Let us not confuse miracles with magic ! "

They wished to brand Jesus as a sorcerer ! They went from one to another, whispering that he had sojourned in Egypt ; that of the ten measures of magic that exist in the world, nine were in Egypt, and that he had possessed himself of them. They said that when he was a baby, he had put dried fishes into water, and they had begun to swim with their withered fins. One of his companions had jostled him, and he had said : "Thou shalt die !"—and the child had fallen dead. At school one day, he had cursed his master, and a minute later, the master, too, had died !

"He has tattooed himself like the *Goyim* ! "

"He has stolen the Name of the Eternal from the Holy of Holies and hidden it beneath his garments ! "

“ He is possessed of Beelzebub ; it is through the Prince of Demons that he expels demons ! ”

“ He will slay you all ! Happily, we put sorcerers to death ! ”

“ Yes, the Torah ordains that sorcerers shall be driven out of Israel ! . . . ”

I watched Jesus. It seemed as if, from afar, he could hear what they said. And when they were near him, it was as though he could read word by word on their lips the lies they had spread the night before.

He put them on their guard : to allege that Satan expelled devils that had been cast forth by the Holy Ghost is a sin against the Holy Ghost. All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to all men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men, neither in this world, nor the world to come—for it is undying sin !

But they replied : “ If thou art he whom thou sayest, give us the Sign—the Sign from Heaven ! ”

At these words, he was filled with anger, and cried out that they were an adulterous generation ; that Nineveh would rise up against them on the Day of Judgment, and that no other Sign would be given them, but the Sign of Jonah. . . .

I could not quite understand what it was all about. My Aunt Sephora did not understand either, and asked Uncle Simeon :

“ Have they not witnessed enough miracles ? ” And pointing to me, she said :

“ Did not the Rabbi heal him ? What more do they require ? ”

“ The Sign from Heaven that no sorcerer can conjure ! ”

“ What Sign ? ”

“ The Advent in glory on the right hand of God ! ”

“ Why does the Rabbi deny them this Sign ? ”

“ Perhaps it is easier to ask than to grant ! ” said my uncle.

And my aunt heard him with amazement.

.

I saw her still more amazed one day when Mary and Martha of Bethany came to her, and asked :

“ Have you met Mary of Magdala ? We are seeking her. . . . We have not found her.”

I must tell you that ever since he had delivered her from the evil spirit, it had been Mary Magdalene who served the Master ; each morning, before he went forth, she shook the dust from his raiment, and each night when he returned, she washed his feet.

“ No one has seen her to-day,” said Martha.

“ Her tent is empty,” said Mary.

“ The veil with which she hid her face lies torn in shreds on the ground.”

“ Perhaps she went forth by night to pray.”

“ She often goes out alone to pray and weep.”

“ Could she have lost her way ? ”

“ What will the Master say when he learns she has vanished ? ”

“ Does he not know all things in advance ? Doubtless, he knows already.”

And Mary and Martha went from group to group, questioning those they encountered. None had seen Mary of Magdala.

“ Let them seek Azael and Zimri too ! ” sneered Nahum.

“ Yes—those purest of the pure who have fled with her ! ” said Bathuel.

“ Azael ? Zimri ? ”

“ They used to prowl nightly round her tent ! ”

"I've seen her at her prayers with them!"

"Beelzebub must have rejoiced in such prayers!"

"Jesus healed her of the demon! . . ."

"And the demon has healed her of Jesus!"

"Our loving Master warned us! 'When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through the wilderness, seeking rest . . .'"

"'And when he finds none, he saith: I will return into my house from whence I came . . .'"

"'And the last state of that man whom we supposed was healed is worse than the first!'"

"The man whom we supposed was healed! . . ."

Aunt Sephora stared at me in terror.

"What are you saying, Abdias? Are you saying that a sick man healed by Jesus . . .?"

"It is not I who say it—your Rabbi said it!"

"You lie! You lie!"

Aunt Sephora was unrecognisable.

.

That night, Martha washed the feet of Jesus. A little way away, but close enough for the Rabbi to hear them, Nahum and Bathuel made a pretence of earnest conversation.

"Where is Mary of Magdala?"

"I have not seen her all day."

"The Master should take heed!"

"Possibly she has repented so wholeheartedly that she has repented of repentance!"

Jesus said nothing. But even from where I sat, I could feel a kind of tremor that shook him. Not that I believe for a moment there was any other link between the Rabbi and Mary Magdalene than the forgiveness of sin. I leave that sort of trash and twaddle to your penny-a-liners, and operatic librettists! But perhaps his

intense suffering was due to the fact that she had sinned the deepest, and he now felt her sin to be greater than his forgiveness.

A rich Pharisee had invited Jesus to sup with him. We were on the other side of the Jordan, just at the spot where the Zionists have erected Rutenberg's Power Station, that colossus of iron flumes and electrified cables which looks like a décor for the Russian ballet in the desert. In those days, there was a town between the two rivers, and in this town was the Pharisee's house.

From the courtyard where we others, of small or no importance, were to have our meal, I could see the banqueting-hall between the pillars.

The guests came in. The host assigned them their seats. Jesus relinquished his to Doeg, and placed himself amongst his apostles at the lower end of the table, saying :

“ Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased ! ”

They took off their *tefillin*, unclasped their belts, and reclined in threes on the couches, leaning on their left elbows. The servants set the first cup of wine before each of the guests, and brought water for them to wash their hands, while Nahum and Bathuel continued to jest :

“ I hear it said that Zimri also has vanished ! ”

“ Has he perchance taken the road to Magdala ? . . . ”

But what was happening ? Jesus had not washed his hands ! Neither had Peter ! Nor John ! Nor Philip ! Nor Andrew, nor any of the apostles ! The host wrinkled his nose in distaste !

It was a serious matter, as you are aware, and I have since learnt. At that time, forks were unknown ; I had walked for centuries before I came across them ! We

took a slice of bread, and scooped up whatever happened to be in the dish. It may seem to be a mere trifle after all these years, but Uncle Simeon had duly explained to me why it was nothing of the sort : if your hands unfortunately came into contact with anything unclean before food, they defiled the bread, which defiled the dish, which defiled the entire meal ! Hence the washing of hands, a ritual that many of the Pharisees held dearer than their very souls.

The host felt that it was incumbent on him to call attention to the omission. While Nahum and Bathuel in the seats of honour continued to make merry on the subject of Mary Magdalene, he said with all courtesy to the Rabbi :

“ Why do you eat with unwashed hands ? Do you not follow the tradition of the Elders ? ”

There followed one of those outbursts which doom a dinner-party to failure from the very first course ! For Jesus cried :

“ Well hath Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites when he wrote : ‘ *This people honour Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me !* ’ You lay aside the commandment of God, and you hold the tradition of men ! Moses said : ‘ *Honour thy father and thy mother,* ’ but if a man shall say to his father or his mother : ‘ It is *Corban*,¹ that is to say a gift to God, by whatsoever thou mightest have profited by me,’ you suffer him to do ought for his father or his mother ! You say : ‘ Whosoever swears by the Temple, it is nothing ; but if a man swear by the gold of the Temple, his oath shall stand ! Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing, but if a man swear by the gift on the altar, his oath shall stand ! ’ Ye fools and blind ! Which is the greater, the gold or the Temple that sanctifieth the gold ? Which is the greater, the gift, or

¹ Corban (Gift to God).

the altar that sanctifieth the gift ? . . . Hear and understand : it is nothing from without a man that, entering into him, can defile him ! But those things which come out of his mouth, and from his heart—slander, false witness, lustfulness, theft, adultery, and blasphemy—these are what defile him ! . . . Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites which make clean the outside of the cup and platter ; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness ! Woe unto you, for you tithe mint and rue and cumin—and pass over judgment and the love of God ! Woe unto you ! Woe unto you ! . . .”

Ah, my dear sir, what a banquet that was ! . . . Couches were pushed back from the tables ; goblets rolled beneath the couches. The guests rushed forth, not even pausing to fasten their belts.

“ To Jerusalem ! ” yelled Nahum. “ To the Sanhedrin ! ”

Numbers who were in the courtyard followed him, not only those who were enemies of Jesus, but many of the disciples who had accompanied the Master for month after month.

“ *What about you ?* ”

I was overjoyed ! At last he had unmasked the impostors and pious frauds who degrade God by the use they make of Him—who degrade, not only God, but all that God stands for to-day in great or lesser degree ; justice, brotherhood of men and nations, and peace on earth, as in Heaven ! For there is nothing that they do not parody and distort !

“ How well he spoke ! ” I said jubilantly to Uncle Simeon. “ How right he was ! ”

“ *And what did your uncle say ?* ”

Ah, my uncle disappointed me ! He said :

“ Yes. He did well to denounce hypocrisy ! Whosoever is not within as he is without is the abomination of

desolation ! But if hypocrites only pay lip-service to the Torah, is the Torah any less to those who carry it in their hearts ? The prophet says : ‘ *On the appointed days, fast in your hearts.* ’ But does he tell us that, to fast in our hearts, we must cease fasting with our bodies ? ”

“ That is a far smaller commandment ! ”

“ All the commandments are great, my son ! ”

Doeg intervened, and now each of them enlightened me in turn :

“ Man is not an angel : he has a body and soul. . . . ”

“ And if he would serve God fittingly, he must serve him with both body and soul. ”

“ Man is not defiled by food, nor purified with water. . . . ”

“ But whether God’s commandments are concerned with love or food, whatsoever God commands is a commandment of God ! ”

I protested. I, too, was becoming a Talmudist !

“ The Master did not dispute God’s commandments—he criticised the tradition of men ! ”

“ And how should we have received God’s commandments except through the tradition of a man—through Moses who wrote them down from God’s dictation ? ”

“ Tradition, like the Law, comes from Sinai ! ”

“ Tradition is a Torah that continues to live and speak to each century in the language of its Elders ! ”

“ Therefore, whosoever destroys tradition shall destroy the Torah ! ”

“ But God said : ‘ I will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thy brethren, like unto Moses. I will put My words in his mouth, and ye shall hearken. But if a prophet shall presume to speak a word in My name which I have not commanded him to speak . . . ! ’ ”

Of a sudden, Uncle Simeon had become utterly changed ! I looked in vain for his customary smile ; his

mouth was stern. What had happened ? He and Doeg agreed with one another ! Hillel and Schammai no longer wrangled ! The good Pharisees were leaving the Master to the mercy of the wicked Pharisees who prevented the coming of the Kingdom ! How, then, could the Kingdom ever come ?

Aunt Sephora trembled in every limb ! Why did she bend over me so strangely ? Why did her hands move so fearfully over my body ? What discovery did she dread to make ?

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I soon learnt ; from that night onward, she could hide her disquiet no longer. I watched her pitifully. Furtively, secretly, but with gestures that betrayed her, she questioned those whom Jesus had healed. In a low voice, she said to the blind man whose eyes had been opened : “ Can you still see ? ” and whispered to the deaf man whose ears had been unsealed : “ Can you still hear ? ” But as soon as she caught sight of me, she fell silent.

How she hung on the words of Uncle Simeon, *her* master, when he spoke of *the* Master ! Now she put a different construction on everything he had said. I watched her, and guessed her thoughts. Yes, she was saying to herself :

“ If the Rabbi is deceived, his words are deceptive. If his words are deceptive, his miracle is deceptive ! . . . ”

And she would scrutinise me anxiously ; in spite of herself, her eyes would ask me :

“ Do you feel stiffness stealing back again into your legs and arms and spine ? . . . If his miracle is deceptive, did he really heal you ? ”

One night—just imagine—she thought I was asleep. As if we had been at home, she crept softly to my bed, and I, as I had been wont to do, breathed evenly to

feign sleep. She dared not touch me, she was too afraid of waking me, but she gazed down at me, and though my eyes were closed, I knew she was scanning me from head to foot in the darkness.

“ My little one ! ” I heard her say, and next I caught the sound of tears.

“ Who knows best—*the* Master, or *my* master ? ” she murmured.

Her voice died away in sobs, and after a pause, she murmured again :

“ Can *the* Master be mistaken ? . . . Can *my* master be wrong ? . . . ”

And she wept ! She wept. . . .

CHAPTER X

“Were the wicked Pharisees going to drag him away?”

Not yet. But now Jesus was no longer surrounded by crowds that fought to get near him. Day by day, the procession that followed him grew thinner.

“The first shall be last, and the last shall be first,” Jesus said repeatedly. “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s pleasure to give you the Kingdom.”

But the Kingdom, so long promised, and which we had believed to be so near, still tarried. Even the faithful began to despair.

But had not Jesus himself changed? As always, he uttered words whose sweetness comforted me, but beneath his tenderness, something grew and grew—that streak of severity which struck me as never before.

He had said: “He that is not against me is for me”; now he said: “He that is not with me is against me.” He had said: “It raineth on the just and on the unjust”; now he said: “Many are called, but few are chosen.” He had said: “Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the earth. Blessed are the merciful, blessed are the peacemakers . . .” But now he added: “Woe unto you that are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full, for you shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. . . .”

The wicked Pharisees parodied his words, and sneered:

“Obey the Master. Has he not said: ‘If thy hand offend thee, cut it off!’ Well, why don’t you cut it off?”

It offends me ! Cut your feet off, too ! Did he not say also : ‘ It is better to enter this world crippled than to become food for the worm that dieth not ! . . . ’ Pluck out your eye ! It is better to enter the Kingdom of Heaven with one eye than to be flung with both eyes into the flames that are not quenched ! ”

The faithful listened, and trembled as they listened.

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One day, we again passed through Magdala. From a house by the waterside, we heard sounds of singing, and the music of flutes.

“ Zimri and Azael must be there ! Shall we call them ? ” suggested Salphaad.

Others shouted at the top of their voices : “ Ohé ! Azael ! Zimri ! Come forth ! Thou too, Magdalene—the Master awaits thee ! He ridded thee of one little devil, and will surely cast forth the seven that have taken its place ! ”

But the sounds of singing and the sweet notes of the flutes continued unbroken, and Mary Magdalene made no reply.

A little further on, we stayed to sup at the house of a Pharisee. As before, I could see, from the courtyard, the Rabbi, his host, his enemies and his apostles in the banqueting-chamber. They lay in groups of three on couches, leaning on cushions that had been strewed round the tables.

Suddenly, a woman passed close by me in the courtyard. In the glare of the torches, we all recognised her.

“ Mary Magdalene ! ”

She was in tears.

“ Has the Master cast forth the seven demons from her even as she approached the house where he sits ? ”

She went into the banqueting-chamber, drew near

to him with bowed head, and knelt at the foot of the couch where Jesus lay between Peter and John. Some of the guests whispered :

“ How can he suffer her to touch him, the bitch who returned to her own vomit ? ”

The servants came and went, mingling the wines, bearing platters. She continued to crouch before him, her forehead against his feet ; she washed them with her tears, dried them with her hair, anointed them with ointment, and covered them with kisses.

Then Jesus began to speak of a certain creditor who had two debtors—one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.

“ And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most ? ”

“ I suppose he to whom he forgave most,” answered the host.

“ You have judged rightly,” said Jesus. “ Do you see this woman ? When I entered into your house, you gave me no water for my feet, you gave me no kiss ; but she anointed me with precious ointment, washed my feet with her tears, and covered them with kisses.”

He paused, and added :

“ Her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much.”

And turning to the woman, he said :

“ Thy faith hath saved thee ; go in peace.”

Ah, how the hypocrites recoiled ! They pushed back the cups and platters as if they had been crawling with vermin !

“ Does faith justify all things ? ” shrieked Bathuel.
“ Does nothing matter ? We can wallow in the filth of Baal and Belial, and as long as we have faith—what faith ?—we shall be saved ! ”

If you could have seen Jesus, as I saw him then, at the lower end of the table ! It was not light that ringed him round, but lightning and thunder crashed in his voice when he spoke :

“ Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers ! Woe unto you that shut the Kingdom of Heaven against men, for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer them that are entering to go in ! Woe unto you ! Ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which are indeed beautiful outward, but within are full of all uncleanness ! Woe unto you because ye build the tomb of the prophets, and say : ‘ If we had lived in the time of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.’ Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers ! How can ye escape the damnation of hell ? God sends you prophets and wise men ; some of them you shall scourge in your synagogue ; some of them you shall kill and crucify ! Upon you shall come all the righteous blood shed on the earth from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias whom you slew between the Temple and the altar ! ”

Bathuel, Salphaad, Doeg, all fled before the whirlwind ! But now Uncle Simeon himself attacked Jesus.

“ How shall we judge this Rabbi who tells us to judge the tree by its fruit ? ” he raged. “ Does he practise as he preaches : ‘ *Love thine enemy . . . turn to him thine other cheek . . . forgive not once, but unto seventy times seven* ’ ? How often has he forgiven the wicked Pharisees ? How much love has he shown them, who are his enemies ? He forbids any to cry : *Raca !* yet he calls them serpents, and a generation of vipers ! He lays upon them the guilt of all the innocent blood that has been spilt from Abel unto Zacharias ! An ocean of blood ! And the cheek, the other

cheek ! I was curious to see him turn it ! But he does not turn the other cheek—he strikes ! ”

Aunt Sephora was terror-stricken. I bore my uncle too much respect to contradict him, but inwardly I thought :

“ The Master loves the lowly—and so loathes the exalted. He has come to save the meek—and so rebukes the wicked whose wickedness closes Heaven to them. The Holy One, blessed be His name, was wroth when Israel filled up the measure of its iniquity. If the Kingdom is to come, must not the wicked first cease to reign ? ”

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But Jesus was deserted by an ever-increasing number of his followers.

Even his family had cast him off.

Do you remember the road along the shore from Tabgha to Tel-Hum ? First, you pass orange-groves, then a house with a red roof, then the blackened ruin of a cistern beside a rounded hill that separates two bays. That was where we halted to rest—we were to rejoin the others later on the outskirts of the town. . . .

I must tell you that my aunt had been silent for many days ; she no longer dared question my uncle either by speech or look, and he, whenever Jesus began to speak, drew her aside without a word.

We had unsaddled the asses, and had lain down under the trees. None of us spoke.

The silence was suddenly broken by voices that came to us from the other side of the hill. A woman—probably an old woman—said :

“ Let us go back. Let us leave him. Do not let us go any further.”

She was answered by the voices of girls and men :

“ Do you remember how proud he was, Mother, even when he was only twelve years old ? ”

"The day you took him to the Temple at Pass-over . . ."

"You yourself told us . . ."

"He did not follow you when you left . . ."

"You sought him for three days . . ."

"And at last you found him seated in the Temple . . ."

"In the midst of the Scribes !"

"He was not listening to them . . ."

"He was teaching them !"

"And when you said to him : ' Son, why hast thou dealt thus with us ? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee, sorrowing ' . . ."

"He said : ' Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business ? ' . . ."

"You did not understand what he meant !"

"But you understand now !"

"And at Cana . . ."

"When he said to you : ' Woman, what have I to do with thee ? ' "

"He always thought himself above everyone !"

"We said to him : ' Since thou art he for whom men wait, go into Judæa ! ' . . ."

" ' Take disciples that they may also see the works thou doest ! ' "

" ' Why so much secrecy ? ' "

" ' If thou do these things, show thyself to the world ! ' "

"And he answered scornfully : ' Go ye up unto this feast. I will not go ! ' "

" ' The world cannot hate you, but me it hateth ! ' "

" ' Because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil ! . . . ' "

" ' My time is not yet come . . . ' "

" ' Your time is always ready ! ' "

"But now his hour has come !"

"It has come for him, and still more so for us !"

"We had to leave Nazareth in shame !"

"We know not where to hide !"

"We are the brothers of a blasphemer who profanes the Sabbath . . ."

"A glutton and wine-bibber . . ."

"Who sits down with publicans and sinners . . ."

"And who says to our Masters : 'Publicans and sinners shall share in the Kingdom . . .'"

"But ye shall have no part therein !"

"He is a sorcerer who has trafficked with Beelzebub !"

"A madman who thinks he is the Messiah !"

"What would you do to him ?" asked the old woman.

"That which men do to those who have lost their wits !"

"Seize him . . ."

"Hold your peace, Simon ! . . ."

"Confine him . . ."

"Jude ! James ! Hold your peace ! I will not suffer you to lay hands on him !"

"Hearken, Mother, you must speak softly to him. He will come, and then . . ."

"You shall not ! You shall not !"

We heard her sobbing, and looked at one another.

"Let us follow them," said Reuben.

We re-saddled the asses, and set forth. . . . Should I warn the Master ? What good would it do ? Even then, I had no fear on his behalf. Was he not stronger than all his enemies ? Had he not said : "Fear not them which kill the body, but not the soul ; fear only those who are able to destroy both soul and body in Hell ?"

I was sure that Reuben thought as I did. But what did my aunt and uncle think ?

You have read what has been written about the family of Jesus. In order to support a certain dogma, time-honoured like all dogmas, it was stated that his mother had only one son, and that James, Simon and Jude are only called her sons because of the wrongful translation of a Hebrew word meaning *cousin*.

“Philologically speaking, there is something to be said for that !”

Do you think so ? Have it your own way . . . I don't mind. . . . I don't want to outrage anybody's beliefs ! But I heard them behind the hill that day ! I heard their envy of him, their baseness, and hatred ! And I can assure you that I was reminded of Joseph who was sold, not by his cousins, but his brothers ! . . .

We journeyed on, keeping close on their tracks. They were silent, and so were we. But as we advanced, we heard sounds in the distance that increased in volume as we drew nearer.

Suddenly as we came to the bend of the road near the city gate, we saw a crowd that shouted and clamoured for a miracle : the Sign from Heaven for which we were all waiting. The angry throng hid Jesus from our sight, and drowned his voice.

His brothers had made their mother rest herself on a boundary-stone, and there she sat as white as death, between her two daughters. It was pitiful to see the anguish of the poor old woman.¹ I was, alas, to see her in far greater agony. . . .

My aunt gazed at the tragic mother, and could not

¹ Possibly the reader may be surprised that Mary is described by the Wandering Jew as being advanced in years. But it must be remembered that John, in his Gospel (viii. 57), assumes that Jesus is nearly fifty.

restrain her own tears. . . . Uncle Simeon gazed at her, too, and took his wife's hand in both of his own.

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One of his brothers spoke to a certain man who threaded his way through the crowd. The time he took seemed endless. At length, another man made his way back to where the mother sat. I recognised him—it was Cleophas, one of the faithful.

"I told the Master that his mother and his brothers were without, and were waiting to speak to him," I heard him say, "but he replied : 'Who is my mother, or my brethren? Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and my sister and my mother.'"

As she heard these words, the poor old woman attempted to rise, but fell back on the boundary-stone. Again she struggled to her feet, and I saw how her knees shook beneath her woollen robe. This time I thought she would fall forward on her face, but her daughters caught her. Bent and broken, she tottered down the road in silence, nor did she once look back.

Her children followed her, their heads bowed. . . .

Then my Uncle Simeon said to my aunt :

"Let us go."

"Yes, let us go," she answered, and they both mounted their asses. . . .

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They, too, were leaving him ! They too, were deserting him ! Would Reuben go with them ?

But Reuben went up to them, and said :

"Father, the Master read their thoughts. Ought he to have delivered himself into their hands ?"

"He ought not to have humbled his mother, even though she had meant to humble him !"

“ But how do you know that in humbling his mother—whom his brothers had only brought as a decoy—he did not suffer far more than she? Is it not incumbent on him to save himself for the other duties he must carry out in the world—duties even higher than the commandment to honour his mother? Is it not written of Levi that he said of his father and mother: ‘*I have not seen them.*’ For Levi saw God!”

To which Uncle Simeon made reply :

“ It is written : *Honour thy father and thy mother.* And it is also written : *Honour thy mother and thy father*, so that you shall hold them both in equal reverence. So great is this commandment that the Holy One, blessed be His name, speaks in the same breath of the reverence we owe to our parents, and the reverence we owe to God!”

My aunt, seated on the ass, looked at her husband, and then at her son. Then she looked at me.

Reuben hesitated. After a pause, he asked :

“ Will I disobey you if I do not follow you? ”

But I said unhesitatingly :

“ Had I a father? Had I a mother? He who restored strength to my body, and set my soul free that I, too, might learn the Torah—is he not my father and my mother? ”

A sorrowful look came into their eyes, but after a moment, my uncle said :

“ Stay, both of you. You will come back to us. *Seek God, and live!* ”

Reuben and I seated ourselves side by side on the boundary-stone. The asses broke into a trot, and bounding up and down on their saddles, my uncle and aunt grew smaller and smaller in the cloud of dust that hid the sun. . . .

That was how even the good Pharisees left the Galilean.

CHAPTER XI

“*So you stayed ? You still had faith ?*”

Yes. My aunt's tears, my uncle's reasoning, slander and desertion alike, left me unshaken. I pitied those who were impatient, and thought the Kingdom tarried too long. The Master had already changed the world for me. I had only to raise my arm, lift my leg : *Arise, and walk ! Arise, and walk !* I rose and followed him : the Kingdom would follow !

But I could see that Reuben was distracted, and for no reason that I could fathom, he spoke repeatedly about the Essenes.

“*The Essenes ? Ah yes . . . what could an Essene think ?*”

In the morning when he rose, he would say :

“How happy I was when I stayed with Grandfather Zadok ! How beautiful it was when they prayed at dawn, and bowed down in their white robes !”

He added suddenly :

“At first—just imagine—I thought Jesus was an Essene ! They, too, hate riches and trafficking—they, too, condemn oaths. . . .”

At night, when we went to bed, he would continue :

“They, too, shun all that is carnal ; most of them even refrain from marriage. . . .”

The next day, he would say reflectively :

“But the Essenes work ; they weave and spin, and sow and reap . . . and they keep more fasts than he . . . they keep the Sabbath holy and take heed that the food they eat is undefiled. . . . In many more things, besides, they are unlike him !”

“What things ?” I wanted to know.

But he made no answer, and murmured absently to himself :

“ No, Jesus is no Essene ! ”

Why was he so sorrowful ? Did he regret Grandfather Zadok even though he was near the Master ? Had all the disputes shaken him ? Was disillusion veiled beneath the silence he maintained when Jesus was roused to anger ? Baruch had left him, my aunt and uncle had left him—would I be the last of the family to stay with the disciples who grew less numerous day by day ? I did not want Reuben to go, as the rest had gone ; I pitied him for his lack of faith. But joy awoke in me : perhaps, I alone, of all the faithful, would be the last to remain with Jesus ?

“ If that day ever came,” I thought, “ I would summon up my courage and speak to the Master, and he would know that I loved him more dearly than all those who had followed him ! ”

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A rumour began to spread that the life of John the Baptist was in danger. Herod Antipas, who had cast him into prison, was a despot with a somewhat original turn of mind : he feared the prophet who cursed him, yet took a perverse pleasure in his curses—he would descend to his cell in order to listen to them ! When he came out into the light of day, his brain was in a turmoil ; he dared not put him to death. His wife Herodias, however, was less complex : John had angered her, and she clamoured for his head. Many wondered of whom the Tetrarch went in most dread : his wife or his prophet ! . . .

Filled with anxiety, the apostles spoke to each other in low voices. We hid in caves, and changed the direction of our journey from day to day.

“ If the Baptist is put to death,” I said to myself fearfully, “ will the Master . . . after him . . . ? ”

But I dared not shape the thought.

We were drawing near to the territory of Philip. Jesus had raised a kind of barricade of anger round himself. I was not always clear towards whom his threats were directed, but I hated in advance those whom he threatened.

One day, he told us a story that reminded me of one of Uncle Simeon’s *maschals*. It was the story of a king who sent forth his servants to summon the guests to a wedding-feast. But in this story, none of them obeyed. The king then sent forth other servants who said : “ The oxen are killed, all things are ready ; come unto the marriage.” But they made light of it, and went their way. One went to his farm, another to his merchandise, and the others seized the servants, entreated them spitefully, and slew them. When the king heard this, he sent forth his armies, destroyed the murderers, and burnt their city.

Who were the murderers? What was the city? And who was the dread king ?

Another time, he spoke of a strait gate where many sought to enter in, but were not able.

“ When once the Master of the house has risen up, he will shut the door,” Jesus cried. “ And when ye stand without and knock at the door, saying : ‘ Lord, Lord, open unto us ! ’ he will reply : ‘ I know not whence ye are ! ’ Then shall ye say : ‘ We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets,’ but he shall say : ‘ I know not whence ye are ; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.’ Then they shall come from the East and from the West and from the North and from the South to sit down in the Kingdom of God. But ye shall be thrust out, and there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth ! ”

Often now, he did not even speak in parables. He would come forth from a remote world of his own, and thunder:

“ Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth ? Nay, I am come to send fire on the earth ! Ah, how I would it were already kindled ! . . . I am come to bring, not peace, but a sword ! The son shall be divided against his father, the daughter against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law ! From henceforth, the house shall be divided against itself ! ”

And Reuben sighed : “ If only you knew how gentle the Essenes are, and how they forbear from anger ! Grandfather Zadok is always patient.”

“ Our prophets, from what I have heard, were not always patient ! ” I made reply.

“ The prophets spoke in the spirit of their generation,” answered Reuben. “ How could a new prophet do service to a new generation if he spoke as they ? ”

At last I understood ! Reuben, the Essene, found Jesus lacking in Christianity ! And perhaps, after all, he was right. . . . The Evangelical pity has really been a trifle exaggerated . . . or rather . . . who could exaggerate it ? It was infinite ! But men refused to acknowledge the existence of anything else in Jesus. It was necessary, was it not, to contrast the New Testament with the Old. It was so tempting for purposes of propaganda ! On one side, the God of Vengeance—on the other, the God of Love ! Unfortunately, however, there was a slight error of judgment ; the God of Love can be found in the Old Testament, and the God of Vengeance in the New ! *The Lord is slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.* . . . Where do you find that, my dear sir ? In the Old Testament ! *Fear Him which is able to destroy both body and soul in Hell.* . . . Where will you find that ? In the New Testament ! *He will not always chide, neither will He keep His anger forever.* . . . That comes from the Old Testament. *The*

blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. . . . And that is from the New ! He will swallow up death in victory ; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces. . . . There speaks the God of Vengeance ! And what does the God of Love offer us in exchange ? Ye accursed ones, ye cannot escape the damnation of Hell !

I feel truly sorry for these gentlemen. The Jesus who cried to his apostles : “ How long shall I suffer you ? ” who stigmatised his hosts as serpents, and addressed poor Peter as Satan ; the Jesus who wished scandal-mongers to the bottom of the sea with mill-stones round their necks, and who said that men must *hate* their fathers and mothers if they would follow him—this nerve-wracked Jesus, luckily for us and for him, bears no likeness to the spun-sugar Jesus they have concocted ! He was Jewish, sir, Jewish from head to foot, and if he could bless like our prophets, he could curse, even as they !

As far as I was concerned, I saw nothing amiss ; nothing that Jesus did or said could have shocked me. And if our God is both just and merciful, why should not His Chosen be alternately merciful and just ?

But it tortured Reuben. He would wander along the road by himself, and gaze far off, towards the South. At length he would return slowly, pause, turn back and rejoin us in unbroken silence.

He fasted and grew pale, I laid my hand on his shoulder, and looked lovingly at him, but he drew away, hid his eyes, and although I had no share in it, I could sense his suffering.

One day, I remember, we had just disembarked near those marshes, you know, where the Jordan flows turbulently into the lake. Yes, of course you know where I mean—you spent three hours there after the storm

you talk so much about. I saw you. You were just going into a corrugated iron shed to visit that Jew from Tiberias, who is in partnership with an Arab, to arrange about the control of the fisheries. Well, that is exactly where we were when two of John's disciples brought the news.

Herod had given a banquet to the chief lords of Galilee in celebration of his birthday. Salome, the daughter of Herodias, had danced naked before the guests, and the Tetrarch, his lust aroused, had cried to her : " Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, even unto half of my kingdom, and I will give it to thee ! " The young Salome had whispered to her mother, and forthwith had said softly : " I will that thou givest me the head of John the Baptist on a charger ! " Whereupon an executioner, armed with an axe, had straightway descended to the dungeon, and had brought back the bleeding head. And Salome had danced again in all her nakedness, holding aloft the charger in both hands. And the head had rolled under the table in the vomit and spittle !

As the recital came to an end, the disciples fled ; the apostles shuddered.

" Where shall we go ? " they asked the Master.

Sorrowfully Jesus replied :

" The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests ; but the Son of Man hath nowhere to lay his head."

Suddenly the storm broke :

" Woe unto thee, Chorazin ! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida ! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes ! But I say unto you : It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the Judgment Day than for you ! And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto Heaven, shalt be brought

down to Hell, for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day ! That is why I say unto you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the Day of Judgment than for you ! ”

Reuben drew sobbing breaths at my side. I clasped his hand in mine, but he snatched it away.

“ I can bear no more ! I cannot bear to hear him curse ! ”

And he rushed wildly away towards Capernaum.

CHAPTER XII

WHAT MADE ME FOLLOW HIM? Why did I search for him in vineyards and olive-groves, granaries and wine-presses, at the customs-house, in the synagogue, and the burial-ground? Did I want to bring him back to Jesus by force, like those loutish guests of whom the Master had said :

“ Compel them to come in that my house may be filled ! ”—terrible words, when I come to think of them, words which were remembered long after by the Inquisition ! . . . or else, was I driven in pursuit of him with such agony of mind by an unconscious desire to facilitate my own desertion ?

When I returned to the Jordan, Jesus had gone, nor did I find a single one of his disciples and apostles. The ships, too, had vanished.

The reeds sighed in the wind. The night was starless. Where should I go ? Lightning flickered as I climbed the mountain ; a whirlwind shrieked as I came down. I slept at the foot of a tree, or, rather, I tried to sleep. Over and over again, I said to myself :

“ You have deserted him like the rest ! You, too, have cast him off ! ”

Day after day, I sought for Jesus. At first, I crossed the Jordan by the Ford of Wailing, and skirted the waters of Merom. Then I turned back, and again climbed the heights. I wanted to catch one more distant glimpse of Capernaum and Bethsaida, and the banks overgrown with oleanders where he had taught us. You think it was foolish of me, don't you ? I thought I could hear his voice, his words—thought I could feel the tenderness that

had filled me, the warmth in my veins, the quickening in my bones when he had said to me on the roof of Simon-Peter's house : " Arise ! " and I had arisen. . . . Later, I crossed the grassy slopes that surround Safed, where even then the bells of the herds at pasture chimed sweetly. I journeyed through all that country where the new Jews have founded colonies—Rosh-Pina, Mahanayim, Tel-Hai, and Metulla, where the mill-wheel, whose ruins you saw, was turning in the water-fall by the hill-side. . . . Even I wax poetic at times, you perceive. . . . I went as far as Banias—yes, as far as that cave where the Jordan flows out of the darkness between yellow rocks and where Herod had erected a statue to Augustus. I found it, but it was Jesus I sought, my soul sought for him too. How could my spirit live without him ?

I could find no trace of him. Step by step, I made my way towards Nazareth. Oh, I knew he would not be there ! But I would go into the carpenter's shop where, as a child, he had sawed planks as he stood beside Joseph ; I would eat pomegranates in the market-place whither he had gone with his mother, a basket slung over his back ; I would drink at the fountain from which he had drunk with cupped hands ; I would gather the red and blue blossoms that he had gathered, and see, from the summit of Nebi-Sain, the olive-groves of Zippori, the cornfields in the valley, Mount Ebal, Mount Gerizim, Mount Carmel and Mount Hermon—all that his eyes had seen. Oh, I was sentimental. . . . But when I reached Nazareth, wherever I went, the people cursed him !

I made my way back to Capernaum, but when I reached it at last, I dared not enter. I skirted the lake as far as Gennesareth and behind the Migdal colony. I scrambled up towards those caves which gape darkly in

Mount Arbela. At first I thought they were empty, but in the last I saw a shapeless heap right at the farthest end. Was it a man, or some wild creature? Gradually, my eyes distinguished a leather belt, a hairy chest, claw-like hands, and eyes that looked forth above a tangled beard in which matted locks were enmeshed.

"Who are you?" I said, and he answered:

"I am the lily of the field which toils not, neither doth it spin; that sows not, neither does it reap. I feed on tree-bark; I wait and pray!"

"For what do you wait?"

"For the Kingdom to come."

"I will wait with you."

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I remained in the cave in a state of stupor. I, too, gnawed tree-bark, and prayed. Sometimes, I questioned him, and he would teach me.

"What will the Kingdom be like?"

"The Kingdom will be another world."

"But in what way will this other world be another world?"

"This world, my son, belongs to the evil spirit, to Satan and the devils who serve him. That is why Israel is in bondage, sin is universal, and man has no knowledge of God. That is why men learn the Torah and forget all they have learned; why they purify themselves and, being purified, are again defiled; why they pray and, having prayed, are not heard, but suffer famine and death."

"And in the other world?"

"In the other world, my son, the evil spirit shall go forth from men's hearts, and the Holy Ghost shall descend upon all mankind. Israel shall reign over the nations, her sons shall be prophets for the peoples, and

God's Law shall flow over mountain and valley as waves flow over the ocean-bed."

"But where will this other world be?"

"Here, on earth. But the earth will no longer be the earth."

"What will it be?"

"Paradise. Every vine shall put forth a thousand branches, every branch a thousand grapes, and every grape a thousand seeds. The fig-tree shall bear fruit on the day it blossoms; the wheat shall ripen on the day it is sown. Man shall procreate sinlessly each night, woman give birth each morning without travail; and all shall feast at the Lord's table. There shall be neither sun, moon, nor stars; the light that was before God created the planets shall light the world. Oh then, my son, a new Jerusalem, built of sapphires, beryls and precious stones, shall descend from on high—a new Temple shall arise, shaded by the Tree of Eden, from whence shall flow the waters of an unquenchable spring: for life shall be everlasting, and death itself be dead!"

At night, I dreamed of all he had foretold. I saw streets of sapphire, fruit grown to the size of mill-stones, and the mill-stones were the size of mountains. When day broke, I questioned him anew.

"When will the Kingdom begin?"

"At first, the earth will be shaken with a great trembling. Springs and rivers will run dry, and waves will roll back, the stars will change their courses, the moon will shed blood, and the sun will give forth no light. Then Elijah will come again. . . ."

"But the Master says that Elijah has already come again, in the shape of the Baptist who cried: 'I am the Voice of one crying in the wilderness.'"

"Even though he has come again, he must come a third time to put back the hearts of fathers in the

breasts of babes, and the hearts of babes in the breasts of fathers. Yes, he will stand upon the pinnacle of dawn, and proclaim peace on earth ! ”

In my dreams, affrighted stars rushed into collision, and barred the sky with lightning. Black fissures gaped in the earth, the seas turned to stone, and a voice of the morning cried : “ Lo, the reign of peace hath begun ! ”

“ And the Messiah ? ” I asked him on another occasion. “ Is the Master the Messiah ? ”

“ Has he ever called himself the Messiah ? He will be the Messiah, my son ; his time has not yet come.”

“ How shall we know when he is the Messiah ? ”

“ When he descends on the earth with the clouds of Heaven.”

“ But how can Jesus, who is on earth, descend from Heaven ? ”

“ He must descend from Heaven, my son, if he is the Messiah ; for the Messiah dwells in Heaven for all eternity.”

“ What does he do in Heaven ? ”

“ He awaits his hour at the foot of God’s throne. He has knowledge and understanding of all things that are hidden. The spirits of wisdom, power and love dwell within him, and with his coming, wisdom and power and love shall descend upon the earth.”

“ How know you these things ? ”

“ Enoch and the Sibyl revealed them to me.”

“ From whom did they themselves learn of them ? ”

“ They learned of them from God. . . .”

Every night, I dreamed. And I dreamed that the sun and moon cried aloud to me : “ How shall Jesus, who is upon earth, descend from Heaven ? ”

On waking, I asked :

“ When Jesus descends from Heaven, where will he appear ? ”

“ He will appear on the pinnacle of the Temple. He will call the sick, the weary, and the wanderers, and will cry : ‘ Behold, the Everlasting Day hath dawned ! ’ Then shall all the peoples be shaken with a great fear, and all the armies shall go up against God’s Holy One on the sacred mountain, and the army of Rome shall go before all the rest ! But He will destroy them all with the breath of His lips. The righteous who lie in Abraham’s bosom shall come down from Heaven, and the dead who sleep in the dust shall awaken, clothed anew in flesh and blood ; and when the trump sounds, the Messiah shall sit in judgment over them ! Then shall the children of God dwell in peace beneath the hand of God. The nations shall praise God ; from all parts of the earth they shall send offerings to His Temple ; they shall walk in His righteousness, and live beneath His Law. And over all men there shall be one abiding Kingdom ; and over all the earth, there shall be abiding peace ! ”

Now, I not only dreamed by night, I dreamed in my waking hours by day. Week after week, as I lay hungering and thirsting in the farthest shadows, I saw confused images of the Kingdom of God in the sunlit mouth of the cave. I beheld a figure on the pinnacle of the Temple. Far below, the dead broke open their coffins ; armies with their breast-plates, lances and standards lay under tables of gold that were surrounded by translucent shapes. And multitudes raised their voices in song beneath a sun grown so great that there was no sky—only a vast, immeasurable sun.

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One morning, the hermit cried :

“ The Kingdom is coming ! ” and dashed out of the cave. I rushed wildly after him, amidst rocks and undergrowth, and by the waterside. . . . But before long I had lost all trace of him.

My feet were bleeding, my head throbbed. I wandered at random, and here and there I begged for bread. I crossed a bridge, I remember, and saw Gentile cities with forums, amphitheatres and triumphal arches. Somewhere or other, I chanced on an aqueduct that lay across a valley ; further on I came upon a citadel of dazzling white stone, and further on still, glimpsed an unknown sea and tracts of flat country from some hill-top where I stood. Then I followed a Roman road that led to a valley of red sandstone from whence hot springs gushed forth. I retraced my steps. I turned and turned, and turned again. . . .

And one night, I know not how, I found myself in a dark and silent town, and was filled with a sense of the familiar. I climbed steep alleys that took me to a square, next I came to cross-roads, and another square where I saw a solitary light in a courtyard whose door stood ajar. And behind a shutter, I saw the face of an old woman who gazed at me, and laughed and wept.

Two arms went round me.

" I have awaited thee," sobbed Aunt Sephora. " I knew thou, too, wouldst return ! "

And her hands moved over my elbows, shoulders and my neck.

" Thou art safe ! Thou art safe ! . . . But how pale thou art ! What have they done to thee ? "

CHAPTER XIII

I WAS BACK AGAIN in Uncle Simeon's shop. But I no longer lay on a pallet, and envied the others as they worked ; I worked, too, and learnt the trade. I smoothed wood, cut leather, hammered and stitched, and oh ! how proud I felt ! Now, when I rose at morning, I could bind on my *tefillin*, and bow down at the end of my prayer, as I took three steps backward and three forward. When I came in and when I came out, I could touch the *mezuzah* !

In short, I had become a complete Jew, and to complete me more completely, Aunt Sephora had chosen a bride for me. For, of course, a Jew must marry : *A man who begets no sons is a murderer ! . . .* My little Dina had such pretty eyes—what pretty children she would have borne me !

When I think back to those days after a lapse of nineteen hundred years, I again feel a thrill of happiness. I lived in an atmosphere of loving intimacy, joy, and understanding. God was so close to us, He was our friend who blessed every second, from the morning prayer that praises Him for having created the crowing cock, the harbinger of dawn, to the evening prayer that thanks Him for having divided night from day, and for making the sun to set, and the moon to rise.

And the Psalms ! I knew them by heart, and sang : “ *As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God !* ” and : “ *Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our fame. He remembereth that we are dust ! . . .* ”

Who said that our God is far away from us ? I felt

Him so near ! What do you think of those gentlemen who, finding our own God too remote, invoke their God with the psalms of *our* God in order to lessen the distance?

And the Psalm on the Torah ! *And I will delight myself in Thy commandments which I have loved ! . . .* Yes, it was my delight to absorb myself in the Torah ! . . . Just imagine, Uncle Simeon was teaching me to read—to read and write ! He taught me to read by letting me spell out the Torah ! He taught me to write by copying out sentences from the Torah ! He used to explain it to me—oh, to be sure, he introduced rather too much *pilpoul* when he brought out the minute points in the thirty-nine tasks unlawful on the Sabbath, and in all the conglomeration of clean and unclean ! But his *pilpoul* began with love, and ended with love !

“Observe the Torah,” he said to me. “But unless you observe it with love, you will observe nothing, for it is written : *Thou shall love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart . . .* and your heart is all that God requires of you !”

Again, he would say :

“You will be rewarded in this world, and the next ; but even when you are serving the Holy One, blessed be His Name, you must have no thought of reward. For one of our Elders long ago taught : ‘Be not like those servants who serve their master in expectation of payment ; be like unto those who serve him with no thought of wages.’ When all men love the Torah with such a love, the Kingdom of God will be established, for whosoever devotes himself to the Torah for love of the Torah creates peace on earth, as in Heaven.”

I strove to do all I could. The Torah helped me to live with the Lord, our God, as Jesus, so it is said, until the coming of the Kingdom, helps the Christians to live with their God. . . .

Yet I missed Jesus. Yes, in spite of my work, in spite of so much joy and understanding, I missed Jesus with his delirium, Jesus with his vision, Jesus who wanted the impossible to be possible.

"Where is he now?" I thought. "Will he ever come back? We understood him so little! Has he gone to proclaim the Kingdom to others? Oh, why did I not go with him to hear his words, and follow him to the ends of the earth?"

The Torah, you see, was a book, but Jesus was a being! It was because he was visible, living, and pitiful that he drew to the God of Israel all those millions of idolatrous hearts that a Book, even a sublime Book, could scarcely touch.

"Towards the God of Israel?"

Yes, of course. You are perfectly well aware that, in spite of everything, Jesus worked for the God of Israel. Maimonides, the great Maimonides himself, took the trouble to explain it to me when I met him in Cairo one day, just as he was leaving the Vizier whom he happened to be treating for gall-stones. I remember it quite well. It was in the course of that same century that I passed St. Francis near Assisi. . . . We walked beside the Nile, and exchanged, as only two Jews are capable of exchanging, the weightiest historical-cum-philosophical reflections.

"No human mind will ever be capable of grasping the designs of the Creator," said the son of Maimon. "This man who believed he was God's anointed led the world into the error of adoring something that was outside God. Yet, thanks to him, the conception of a Messiah was spread world-wide, and the words of our prophets went forth even to far-flung islands. When, therefore, the true Messiah appears, all mankind will be in readiness to receive him."

Thus spoke Maimonides, and from that day forth, I realised that Jesus was made for the *Goy*, as the Torah for the *Kid*.¹ But I was still somewhat of a *Goy* when I lived with Uncle Simeon. That was why I missed Jesus !

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They all believed I had deserted him like themselves. I was careful not to undeceive them. I feared to wound them. We never spoke of him. Now and then a customer would happen to mention his name. Ought we to have silenced them ? It would hardly have been discreet to offend a customer !

Once it was Sara, the baker's wife, who had come to haggle over a pair of sandals. In the middle of trying them on, she told us a story of a stable, shepherds, Magi, and a star—a story which has had a fairly large circulation since then.

“ Ah ? ” said my uncle, and that was all the reply he made. But I thought :

“ If the star appeared when Jesus was born, that might have been the Sign from Heaven for which we all clamoured ! ”

On another occasion, Rebecca, the weaver, came in to have her sandals re-soled. She had spoken to some proselytes, and while Uncle Simeon examined the worn-out sandal, she asked him if he had heard any talk of an angel who had announced to Mary, before her bridal day, that she would conceive a son by the breath of the Holy One, blessed be His Name.

“ No ! ” answered my uncle, and mechanically handed back her sandal.

Next, there was a fanatical old scholar who had burrowed into heaven-only-knows-what archives to prove that Joseph, the carpenter, was a descendant of David.

¹ Jew.

I forget whether his genealogical table squared those of Luke and Matthew, which flatly contradict each other, but I remember wondering : “ If Jesus is begotten by the breath of the Holy One, blessed be His Name, what does it matter to his disciples whether Joseph, the carpenter, is the son of a carpenter, or the son of David ? ”

.

Shortly before *Chanukah*,¹ the leather merchant paid us his yearly visit and, as he spread his samples on the ground, said casually :

“ Have you heard any fresh tidings of Jesus since they stoned him ? ”

I happened to be busy with my hammer. As he spoke, I felt as if it had struck my heart.

“ Stoned ? ” I murmured.

And the hammer dropped from my hand. . . .

My uncle made a sign to him to say no more, but he, stooping over his wares, saw nothing else.

“ So your uncle and cousins did not tell you ? ” he said. “ Yet they were there. It took place in the Temple at *Succoth*.² A nice scandal it made ! . . . Oh, they did not kill him, you may be sure ! ”

My heart began to beat again ; until that moment, I had not realised it had stopped. . . .

“ He fled,” went on the leather merchant. “ He always manages to escape ! . . . He has again been seen in Galilee.”

My lips moved—I was hardly conscious of moving them :

“ Stoned ? Why did they stone him ? ”

“ Because of what he had said.”

“ What had he said ? ”

¹ Feast of the Dedication.

² Feast of the Tabernacles.

“ Well, Simeon, which leathers will you take ? ”

But Uncle Simeon was not looking at them ; he was looking at me. And like a record that revolves, and automatically emits words of which it has not the slightest comprehension, so now my voice reiterated :

“ What did he say ? What did he say ? ”

“ I cannot quite remember,” answered the merchant. “ But it was to the effect that Moses had spoken of him, and God had borne witness to him . . . that those who do not understand what he says do not know God. . . . Let me see, what else did he say ? . . . Oh yes—that he had heard the truth from God, and that they who did not hear the truth from God were not of God ! That they were the sons of the devil, but he was the Son of God ! . . . Yes, he said all these things ! Consequently, he was called a Samaritan, a fool, and a madman ! But when he asserted that he was born before Abraham, although he is not yet fifty, they would hear no more, and answered him, not with speech, but with stones ! ”

To my bewilderment, my lips continued to move. They were forming words that had been spoken by the hermit in the cave, they were saying :

“ Yet, if the Messiah was born before the creation of the world, as Enoch tells us, he must also have been born before Abraham ! ”

My uncle attempted to laugh.

“ What ! You who can scarcely read, already read what fools have written ! ”

Timidly, Reuben hazarded :

“ Who can say whether all the souls of men are not born before the creation of the world ? Perhaps they all descend from Heaven. Why should not the soul of the Messiah, the first-born soul, descend like the others, when all have descended ? A few who dwelt with Grandfather Zadok held this belief.”

“Why concern yourselves with what is above your heads, my children?” chided Uncle Simeon. “Why try and fathom what is too deep for you? What good does it do you to meddle with mysteries? Is there nothing else you can learn? We know, from most of our Elders, and our sacred writings, that the Messiah will be a man, a just and mighty King, the descendant of David, who will bring peace on earth. Is that not enough for you?”

.

That is what Uncle Simeon thought about the Messiah, and since then many different things have been thought about him. In Babylonia, for instance, I talked to a Gaon, during that century when I had advised John Huss. . . . No, I am mistaken—I met John Huss six centuries later! . . . No, five centuries! . . . It is of no account, anyway! . . . The Gaon, who was called Samuel, said to me:

“The Messiah’s time will be different from ours, because in his day all nations will be free.”

You will admit that, for a Gaon, he was far-sighted! . . . Your modern poets inform me that the Messiah is Israel, and indeed, when I encounter in the course of my travels my little Jews of the ancient ghettos, transformed, as if by magic, into gentlemen—American, Egyptian, Turkish, Russian, Polish, Roumanian, Spanish, Italian, English, French, and occasionally even German gentlemen—and when I notice they are still Jews whether it pleases them or not (and it does not invariably please them!) I begin to dream:

“If only they had escaped from so much torture in order to offer the world, that tortured and still continues to torture them, this one small thank-offering: peace on earth, the peace of the Messiah! . . .” You will say,

of course, that these gentlemen do not appear to be considering my little project very seriously. But for some time I have been considering how to make them consider it ! In fact, I am now considering the matter so seriously that through turning it over and over in my mind, on certain nights I have reached the point of wondering whether, when all is said and done, I myself am not the Messiah ?

But when I lived with Uncle Simeon I was not so ambitious. And while the leather merchant gathered up his wares, I repeated to myself :

“ They stoned him. . . . He has fled into Galilee ! Who is with him ? Do his apostles still follow him, or have they too deserted him ? . . . Suppose he were alone ! Suppose he had none left to defend him ! . . . Can I leave him all alone, I to whom he gave back more than life ? . . . But how can I go to him, how can I leave Dina whom I must lead beneath the *huppa*¹ so soon after *Chanucah* ? ”

.

It was *Chanucah*.

“ *Chanucah* is the Festival of Lights,” explained my uncle. “ In memory of the Maccabees who purified the Temple when they had driven out the Syrians. According to the school of Schammai, eight lights are lit on the first night, and one less on each successive night ; but according to the school of Hillel, one light is lit on the first night, and one more on every night that follows until eight are burning. I, therefore, shall begin by lighting one light.”

And each evening, he lit a fresh light ; and the row of flames grew longer, night after night, in the tiny holders of the *menorah*.² Yet Baruch sighed :

¹ Bridal canopy.

² Lamp.

“ Ah, if only Jesus had consented ! All Israel this year would be celebrating *Chanukah*, as in the days of the Maccabees, in a Temple purified of the Romans and the Roman eagle nailed there by Herod—the abomination of desolation ! ”

“ If Jesus had consented, what would you have done ? ” asked my uncle.

“ What our people did under the rule of Archelaus. They went up to the Temple, their cloaks folded closely about them, and; once within, drew out their daggers. They met with no resistance when they seized the Antonia Tower, now occupied by the Guards of the Temple ; simultaneously they took possession of the Tower of Siloam whose small garrison they surprised and massacred. If we ourselves had taken command of those two positions that command the whole city, the entire country would have risen in revolt ! ”

“ And after that ? ” asked my uncle.

“ After that ? Jesus would be king over Israel ; and the King of Israel would be king over all the world ! ”

“ And after that,” said my uncle, “ the Romans would return with their armies, and naught would remain but to count the rows of crosses by the wayside ! ”

“ But the miracle ! ” exclaimed Baruch. “ When men perform the work of God, God performs miracles ! With God’s help, Jesus performs miracles ! He can perform miracles if he desires ! ”

And simultaneously I exclaimed :

“ If he is the Messiah, he will destroy all the armies with the breath of his lips ! ”

“ If he is the Messiah ! ” murmured my uncle.

And Reuben murmured : “ If he is the Messiah ! ”

.

Chanukah was over. My wedding-day was drawing near. I was putting the finishing touches to a dainty pair of

sandals, exquisite little sandals of soft, white leather, which Dina was to wear for her bridal.

We loved each other dearly, she and I. Oh, not “up to the ears,” as you say in Russian, if you speak Russian—ours was what you now call a marriage by arrangement. But in those days we believed that, arranged or otherwise, all marriages were arranged by God.

Every Sabbath, between the two prayers, I went to see Dina, but naturally I saw nothing more of her than her eyes, and even her eyes I was never allowed to see alone. A chosen bride must not be lightly approached, and her mother was always present to keep vigilant watch over us. We exchanged tender phrases about the weather at the rate of three words to every ten minutes—except when Dina asked me about Jesus. Then all was changed ! She made me give her detailed descriptions of what he said, and what he did ; she wanted to know about his miracles, his friends and enemies, and a host of things besides ; she made me tell her how I had lost him, and whether I longed to find him again.

I tried to answer her in such a way that she would not be wounded. But a woman is a woman, a man is a man, and a woman can always discover what a man is attempting to hide from her.

When the sandals were finished, I took them to her myself, and as my visit was an unexpected one, Dina was alone. At first, I was too confused to speak. She looked at the sandals, then at me, and said so sorrowfully :

“ They are very beautiful. But do you think they will ever lead my feet beneath the bridal canopy ? ”

I reddened. She trembled, her eyelids quivered, and in a low voice that had a faltering note, said hurriedly :

“ Go to *him* ! Go now—as thou art ! ”

“ But our wedding ? ”

“ I understand. I will explain everything to them !
Go ! . . . My mother gave me these shekels for the Feast
. . . look . . . take them for the journey. . . .”

She had such beautiful eyes. At that moment they sparkled with something suspiciously like tears. . . . Ah well, I left her. I ran and ran . . . I was filled with an ecstasy of joy . . . I do not believe that in two thousand years, I was ever again conscious of such joy !

CHAPTER XIV

THIS TIME, I did not wander at random. I went straight along the road that leads to Tiberias ; I did not even pause for sleep.

When I had passed through Magdala, I chanced on a man who said that he had seen Jesus going through the vineyards and olive-groves on the way to Cana. He was not alone ; some of the apostles and disciples were with him. I began to climb in that direction.

Twilight was falling when I saw a shepherd standing near a hut. There was something familiar about him, and I asked :

“ Were you not one of the disciples ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Yet you have left the Master ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Why ? ”

“ He said to me : ‘ Let the dead bury their dead.’ I followed him, not even stopping to bury my father who had died while he and I were alone in this wilderness. A few weeks later, we passed this way and I found his body. It had rotted where it lay, and was a crawling mass of decay. . . . The jawbones protruded . . . there were only gaping sockets where there had been eyes. . . . So I buried my father . . . and stayed behind. . . .”

When I heard the shepherd’s story, I suddenly felt as though I were utterly alone ! I seemed to be on the brink of nothingness—I grew sick and dizzy. . . . What was happening to me ? I could not understand. . . .

A little lower down, before the tower of a vineyard,

I saw a vine-dresser. He, too, had been one of the disciples, and I asked :

“ Why do you no longer follow the Master ? ”

“ I left my wife and son behind in this tower to labour in the vineyard,” he replied. “ A few weeks later, we chanced to come this way ; I hastened to see them. But thieves came in the night. They took my tunic ; I gave them my cloak. They struck me on one cheek ; I turned the other, as Jesus had taught me. But my wife . . . they dragged her along by the legs . . . beneath my very eyes, one after another . . . I made no attempt to defend her ! . . . They sped away in the darkness—they took my son with them by force, and I made no attempt to pursue them ! . . . Now my wife is with child—and I am childless. And all day long, all night long, I say over and over again to myself : ‘ Why did you not resist evil ? ’ And I hate the Master—I will follow him no more ! ”

On hearing this second story, I was seized with a fit of trembling. Was it only my body that shook, or was the whole world shaking too ?

Night had fallen. There was a full moon, just as there is to-night. Mist trailed like wisps of white wool in the hollows. . . .

“ For many months you have lost faith in him ! . . . ” I said to myself.

Of a sudden, it seemed that it was not I who spoke, but a voice within me, a voice that grew louder and louder and louder :

“ Long, long ago, you lost faith in him ! You left him ! Like all the rest, you left him ! You left him because you no longer believed in him or his Kingdom ! ”

I shuddered and ran wildly on. Words I had heard, words to which I had tried to shut my ears, whirled in my brain :

“ Is our justice not enough for him ? Does he require a new justice ? . . . By what right does he forgive sins ? Who can forgive sin but God alone ? ”

And now the voice did not come from within me ; there were voices outside me. They took form, grew visible, and assumed the shapes of disciples—of all the disciples who had left him, as I had left him ! Yes, all of them were there—I knew them, each one ! I saw Baruch, and Reuben, and Nathan of Cana, and Michael of Tiberias, and Uriah of Chorazin.

“ A Messiah who will not be king ? ” they cried. “ The Messiah of cowards and women ! . . . He does not turn his other cheek ! He strikes ! . . . Son of Man ! by what right does he call himself the Son of Man ? . . . Son of God ! By what right does he call himself the Son of God ? ”

I rushed down the hill ; so did they. I clambered up again ; so did they. They pursued me without respite, and when I turned back to see if I had out-distanced them, I saw crowds at my back.

“ Why are they all clad in robes of white ? ” I thought.

They waved their arms and clenched their fists, and, as if they could see Jesus running behind me, they ran after him ! Erstwhile cripples flung their crutches at him, those who had been blind tore their eyes out and flung them at him. And they screamed :

“ If thine is the Kingdom, can four or five Pharisees prevent thee from giving it to us ? Where is thy Kingdom ? Where hast thou hidden it ? And the Sign from Heaven that thou shouldst have shown us ? Show us the Sign—show us, if thou canst ! . . . Thou canst not ? Sorcerer, charlatan, profaner of the Sabbath ! . . . Seek the help of Beelzebub, the Prince of Demons ! Worker of false miracles, whither go the devils that thou casteth forth ? Do they return to the house from which they

came ? Do the evil spirits return ? Does each bring with him seven others, more wicked than himself ? ”

I had come to a city. Was it a real city, or a city in a dream ? . . . Near the gate, a madman was chained to two iron rings in the wall. His face was green in the moonlight, his lids were heavily shadowed, and his close-set eyes were bloodshot. His knees were pressed together, his ankles spread-eagled, and he strained forward with his shoulders, and bent back his wrists as he dragged at the chains. He howled hideously as he tried to tear himself free by wrenching his arms from their sockets. Him, too, I recognised. I had seen him healed at the feet of Jesus, and heard him murmur in the tongue of angels :

“ Blessed art thou, Jesus of Nazareth ! ”

But now the demon again shrieked from his lips :

“ What have we to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth ? Thou hast come to destroy us ; thou shalt not destroy us ! We shall take back from thee all that thou hast taken from us, Son of Man, Son of God, dog of Beelzebub ! ”

I fled, and the crowds behind me, the crowds that followed me, shrieked :

“ Run ! Those whom he healed are not healed ! Run ! Thou hast still the use of thy limbs ! To-morrow, thou shalt run no more ! ”

I came to a vast plain. Red and yellow flowers blossomed everywhere. I could see the colours clearly in the moonlight. An upturned bowl was silhouetted against the upturned bowl of the sky.

“ Mount Tabor ! ” I thought.

And I sped on flying feet across the plain !

Those behind me continued to shriek : “ Run ! If thou shouldst lie down for a single moment, thou shalt lie down for ever ! ”

I ran. I ran. Suddenly I fell face forward on the ground.

“ Arise ! Arise ! ”

I rose. This time I fell backward.

“ All is ended—thou shalt walk no more ! ”

I tried to touch my elbows and shoulders, as Aunt Sephora had touched them. I could not. My hand had turned to stone, my arm had turned to stone. I tried to raise my legs. My legs had turned to stone !

“ All is ended, ended—thou shalt walk no more ! ”

Now I was alone. The crowds had vanished. The moon had disappeared. The sky was heavily overcast.

I thought of the ship on the water, the dark figure in the stern. I remembered the lovely words : “ Blessed are the merciful, for they shall find mercy. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall see God ! ”

Could he, who had uttered such words, have lied ?

I recited his lovely prayer :

“ Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. . . . ”

And I cried : “ Deliver me ! Deliver me from evil ! ”

And then I murmured :

“ I have lost faith in him ! . . . I have turned to stone. . . . Because he is not near me, I have lost faith in him ! . . . If he were near me, would I have faith in him ? . . . I have turned to stone ! I have turned to stone ! . . . ”

I was conscious that the sun was rising behind me. . . . And I looked at Mount Tabor lit by the sun.

Faith ! . . . The faith he required ! The faith that saves us ! . . . The faith that can move mountains !

Again I gazed at Mount Tabor.

“ If thou hast faith, order Mount Tabor to remove. It will obey thee ! ”

“ Mount Tabor ? . . . Order Mount Tabor ? . . . ”

“ Order Mount Tabor ! ”

“ How should Mount Tabor obey me ? I have turned to stone—Mount Tabor is stone ! ”

“ Order it to remove ! Order it to remove ! ”

And I cried : “ Arise, Mount Tabor ! Mount Tabor, arise ! ”

But the mountain was still.

“ Order it to remove ! ”

Once more I shouted : “ Arise ! Take up thy plain, and walk ! Arise ! Take up thy plain, and walk ! ”

And Mount Tabor stood motionless !

But as I continued to scream, the figures of men who were descending the mountain came into sight above the cactus-bushes. Who could they be ? . . . Peter and John ! James was behind them ! . . . But between them . . . between them . . . Jesus !

Straightway I arose. And walked !

CHAPTER XV

As he told me how he had walked again, the man had automatically begun to walk. We had left the slopes of the amphitheatre, and were following the hills that overlook Moab and Jericho. When the emotion he had aroused in me had subsided a little, I asked tentatively :

" And Jesus ? What had happened to him in the meantime ? "

What had happened to Jesus . . . ?

He was lost in his own thoughts.

The leather merchant had talked of an incident at the Temple, a stoning. . . .

A pause, then :

Some of the disciples spoke of a sojourn on the shores of Tyre and Sidon. . . .

" As to that, may I say . . . ? "

For some time, several questions had been on the tip of my tongue. Was I at last to have the chance of asking them ?

" May I make a small comment ? "

Another pause.

" These wanderings of the Master . . . "

Still no word from him.

" When, for instance, did he leave Nazareth ? How often did he return to Capernaum ? Whereabouts was that country of the Gadarenes, Garasenes, or Gergesenes where he made a legion of devils enter into a herd of swine ? Whereabouts was . . . ? "

Suddenly he began to sneer.

The Travels of Jesus ! Oh, I understand ! Your geographers and topographers have gone astray ! But how do you expect me to trace the route any more successfully than they ? . . . Oh ! I remember a few

details, of course ! For instance, if you go beyond that rock that overhangs Migdal to where the road descends steeply, you will see a sign-post with the words : “ SEA-LEVEL ” on a blue ground—yes, just opposite the telegraph-pole ! Well, that was where I heard the Rabbi say : “ Lay up for yourselves a treasure in Heaven that faileth not, neither moth corrupteth . . . ” But these words and others, he repeated at various places, just as he repeated his miracles. Do you think we were aware of the scenery at such moments ? When Jesus was there, nothing else existed !

But the sequence of events in your story ! You told me about the stilling of the tempest before the healing of the paralytic—your own healing—and in the Gospel of St. Mark the incidents are reversed ! You placed——”

I might just as well tell you that in the Gospel of St. John, Jesus turns the money-lenders out of the Temple right at the beginning, whereas, in the three other Gospels—the Synoptic Gospels, you call them—he casts them out at the end ! In reality, as you know even better than I, the incidents in all four Gospels have been jumbled up—I don’t know by whom, but I have a shrewd idea why ! . . . But what have I done, my dear sir ? Merely created order where they created disorder ! Only, I have been careful. I have never published *my* Gospel, so no one has ever been able to shuffle the incidents !

“ What of theologians and historians ? ”

Theologians ? Historians ? Don’t mention them, if you please ! There is David Strauss who fixes the date of publication of your Synoptic Gospels in the year 150, then comes Renan who ascribes them to the years 70, 67, and 65 ! Next, you have Harnack who assures us they appeared in 50 ! Fashion is as fickle in chronology as it is in dress, and according to whether skirts are worn short

or long, so this or the other *reporter* is dragged from the grave where he was enjoying a well-earned rest and rudely awakened three thousand years earlier or five thousand years later to re-daub his little palimpsest !

“ *Perhaps, then, as you have more knowledge of the subject, you can supply me with less contradictory information ? Out with it ! Tell me : Who really did compile the stories that make up the Gospels ? When did the work begin, and when did it end ?* ”

You must count me out, I’m afraid ! I have travelled everywhere to a small extent, but I have never been in more than one place at a time ! I make no pretence to acquaint you, like those gentlemen I have just mentioned, with what took place in Zion or Rome while I myself was in Lutetia or Gibraltar ! I can only tell you what I saw. I leave romance to your commentators !

But when you are quoting, you might at least keep to the texts ! Just look how you arrange, abridge, condense ! . . . ”

Do you want me to recite the Gospels by heart ? I am quite ready to do so ! But you must give me time ! I have to take a little trip round the world, my dear sir—round, and back again ! . . . Besides, I don’t *quote* ! I repeat what I myself heard ! As to the sense of my *texts*, as you call them, it agrees with that of the others—which differ, as you’ll admit, more in form than in meaning. And if the words I use occasionally differ from theirs, why shouldn’t I, as well as they, be entitled to my little variants ?

“ *And Uncle Simeon ?* ”

What about Uncle Simeon ?

“ *You put arguments into his mouth that were used by our rabbis centuries before him, or centuries later !* ”

Well, why shouldn’t Uncle Simeon have said what was said later, or what had already been said ? What does my Uncle Simeon’s belief typify ? The belief of Israel !

What difference does a century more or less make to Israel?

"*But . . .*"

Do you want a little advice, my dear sir? It would be wiser to keep such comments to yourself, in future, otherwise you run the risk of hearing no more from me!"

"*Forgive me—I didn't say a word!*"

So much the better . . . where was I?

"*At Mount Tabor. You had begun to doubt. . . .*"

His sorrowful mood had suddenly returned!

Yes, I doubted that night . . . or rather . . . it was a physical doubt, an hallucination, you might call it. Up on the heights all the sayings of his adversaries had rushed chaotically into my mind, without rhyme or reason. They had become shapes that had pursued me and shrieked at me, like figures in some monstrous chimæra. . . .

But now the nightmare was over. Jesus had come down from the mountain . . . it was towards Jesus that I ran! . . . Ah, the joy that thrilled through me when I reached him at Djebourieh, where the cactus grows, you remember. I had been away from him for so long! Had I been alive during all that time? No! But now I was alive! I felt life surge through me—the life that streamed from him—it flowed strongly round me, submerged me, yet upheld and sustained me!

I looked at him as he stood in the sunlight, surrounded by villagers, apostles and disciples. He was irradiated with light! I had doubted the very sun, and this same sun now said to me:

"All things are possible to him who believes!"

"Yes," I thought, "A short time ago, I lay like a stone of the mountain in the plain, and now I am here! The stone arose and walked!"

At the Rabbi's feet, a child contorted its limbs, and foamed at the mouth. Jesus said :

"Thou deaf and dumb spirit, come out of him ! Enter in no more !"

The spirit came forth, howling. The child lay motionless, apparently lifeless, and many murmured :

"He is dead ! He is dead !"

But Jesus took the child's hand, and set him on his feet ! . . . And I felt that I, too, was freed, that I, too, was upright !

I tried to look at the Master. Had he changed, or had my eyes suffered change ? Did I only see him through those visions of the hermit in the cave ? Jesus ! The Messiah ! . . . Born before the world began ! . . . During eternity he had awaited his hour at the foot of God's throne ! He had descended from Heaven ! He would ascend again into Heaven ! . . . Jesus, so near to me once more, yet so remote ! So infinitely more remote than hitherto ! More distant than the sun that shone down on him from the sky—the sun that he irradiated from the earth !

.

Again we set forth. . . . Oh, those who followed him were a mere handful. I looked amongst them for Mary Magdalene, and Mary and Martha of Bethany, but they were not to be found. I wondered why. But Joanna, the wife of Chuza, was there ; she was walking in front with Salome, the mother of James and John.

A few of them greeted me : Philip, Thaddeus, Thomas and Judas.

"You have returned. Schalom ! Schalom !¹ Where have you tarried so long ?"

¹ Peace ; ordinary Hebrew greeting.

The Master, too, had seen me. He had not spoken to me . . . But when we reached Tel Adassim, he told us one of his parables. Which do you think it was ? Can you guess ? It was the parable of the Lost Sheep ! He had already told it to us when Mary Magdalene had come back. For whom was he telling it now ? I dared not admit it to myself, but I thought I knew. Was not Jesus the shepherd who left his ninety-and-nine sheep in the wilderness to seek for the one that was lost ? And the sheep that was found—was it not my own soul that had gone astray ? The shepherd laid the sheep on his shoulder rejoicing, and when he reached home, called together his friends, saying to them : “ I have found my sheep which was lost ! ” and he was more rejoiced over this one sheep than all the others that had never strayed !

Could the master really be filled with joy because of me ? Could he be filled with joy that I, who had doubted, doubted no more ? Could I be a source of joy to the Master ?

I remembered my thoughts during that night ; again I heard those voices within me and around me that had spoken evil of him ; again I saw the spectral crew, conjured up by my brain, threaten him with clenched fists as they shrieked blasphemies. I hung my head, and pressed my lids tight shut to keep back the tears that threatened to overflow.

.

At the gates of Sunam, ten lepers came towards us, and halted some little distance away.

“ Master, have mercy on us ! ” they besought.

They were swathed from head to foot in white wrappings, their faces were covered with scabs that glistened like snow.

Jesus did not touch them, only made answer :

“ Go. Show yourselves to the priests ! ”

In single file, the white shapes moved slowly out of sight along the road.

“ Why would he not heal them ? ” I thought.

Near a lemon-grove, we came to a stop. Judas led me towards Alfouleh to ask the Samaritans for safe conduct.

Had we reached the point when we had to ask permission to go unmolested ? Was Jesus still being hunted ?

On our way, Judas besieged me with questions. How had I come to leave Jesus ? How had I returned ? And this, that and the other ! As you can imagine, I had no desire to confide in him, but he was so insistent that in the end I told him everything : my sojourn in the cave, my return to the shop, what Reuben and Baruch thought, what my aunt thought, and what my uncle thought ! He contracted his brows that were as red as flames, and muttered :

“ What ! Does your Uncle Simeon still continue to argue ? Yet the texts are all to be found. How can a scholar look at them and not see them ? ”

The Samaritans refused us safe conduct ! Those very Samaritans who had once welcomed Jesus ! Even the Samaritans would not give him refuge ! . . . Ah, the anger of James and John when they heard !

“ Wilt thou that we command fire to come down from Heaven to consume them ? ” they cried to the Master.

But he answered gently :

“ I have not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.”

Ah, when I heard him utter such words ! . . . I was saved ! The world was saved ! . . .

Whilst he was yet speaking, one of the lepers hastened to us. The glistening white scabs had melted from his face. He flung himself at the Master's feet to thank him. And behold—the erstwhile leper happened to be a Samaritan ! Jesus said :

“Where are the other nine? Were they not also cleansed on the road? But none returned to give glory to God save this stranger!”

“Am I like the other nine?” I thought. “I who have not given thanks to him?”

And I flung myself at his feet beside the leper who had been cleansed.

He looked from one to the other of us, and back again. At last he said to me gently, but so distantly :

“Arise.”

And to the leper he said with none of that remoteness :

“Arise, thy faith has made thee whole!”

The healed leper arose; the Rabbi rose; all rose. But I——

“He did not say to me: ‘Thy faith has made thee whole.’” I thought. “Am I not saved? Have I not faith?”

And I stayed there, alone, on my knees.

But a hand took mine, and as Jesus had set the child he had healed on its feet, so Thomas helped me to rise.

Side by side, we followed the rest.

.

Presently, we were joined by Judas. . . . My mind was distraught.

“Surely you have no doubts left,” I repeated to myself. “Did you ever doubt? . . . But the Master believes that you have lost faith!”

Some distance ahead of us, the apostles were wrangling amongst themselves.

"Do you hear them, Thomas?" said Judas. "They are arguing amongst themselves as to which of them shall be greatest. Each one wishes to be above all the rest!"

"Let them argue!"

"They are not always informed by the Holy Spirit! They do not understand anything; they will never understand. When the Rabbi says to them: 'Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees!' they think he is referring to certain loaves they forgot to bring! As to knowing the text, even from hearsay . . . ! Why, why does the Master surround himself with fools?"

"Yes," sighed Thomas, "if ever his followers lost faith, it would hardly be restored by his chosen few!"

. . . "If his followers lost faith!" . . . Whom did he mean, himself or me? . . .

"Yet it is through them that he wished to change the hearts of men!" went on Judas. "He sends them out on missions! Fishermen! This James, this John, whom he calls *sons of thunder*! Because they flare up at the least word, I suppose! And because they make much uproar! Even so, the crash of thunder is far louder! . . . And this Simon whom he calls Peter! For that matter, he has as much intelligence as a rock! But though there are many who study, give thought to study, and understand, he has confided the keys of Heaven to this rock!"

"You ought not to have spoken of it, Judas," said Thomas. "It was a secret between the Master and the Twelve."

"Do you think Peter could have kept such a secret? Do you think he could refrain from boasting to the whole

world that he had been given the keys of Heaven ? ”

“ The keys of Heaven ! ” I exclaimed, wonder-struck.

“ Yes—the keys of Heaven, and to Peter of all people ! And as if that were not enough, the Rabbi added to him : ‘ Whomsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven ! ’ Why does he favour Peter so unjustly ? Because Peter was first with the answer that was on the tip of all our tongues ! . . . Was it not so, Thomas ? All of us—save, perhaps, yourself ? ”

“ I ? I was ready to make the same answer as the rest of you ! ”

“ What answer ? ” I asked. “ What answer ? ”

“ Listen. We were going from village to village. The Rabbi asked us : ‘ What do men say that I, the Son of Man, am ? ’ And we replied : ‘ Some say that thou art John the Baptist who has returned, others that thou art Elijah, and others still that thou art Jeremiah or one of the prophets. ’ ‘ But whom say ye that I am ? ’ he asked again, and with the headlong speed of a rock that crashes down from a mountain, this Rock hurled himself to the fore, and before any of us could open our lips, cried : ‘ Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God ! ’ Whereupon Jesus said to him : ‘ Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona : for flesh and blood have not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven ! ’ ”

When I heard these words, my hands shook ; something seemed to take my breath away, and, trembling, I cried :

“ The Master said that ? ”

“ Yes ! ”

“ Did he himself say he was the Messiah ? ”

What was the matter with me ? Did I not believe that he was the Messiah ? He forbade us to call him the

Messiah, yet surely, in spite of that, I believed it. . . . Had I not always believed it?

But Thomas coughed once or twice, and remarked drily :

“The Master did not say: ‘I am the Messiah’; he praised Peter for having said so—an entirely different matter !”

“I cannot see that it is any different,” cried Judas with a shrug of his shoulders.

“But I can !” said Thomas.

Did Thomas doubt? Did one of his apostles doubt?

.

I do not know whether the Master ventured into Capernaum, the city he had cursed, to give it one more chance to repent, but be that as it may, we arrived there towards noon on the day before the Sabbath. We had scarcely eaten when Peter signed to Thomas and me to follow him.

“The Rabbi desires that I should pay the half-shekel of tribute-money to the Temple for him,” he said. “Both of you must witness in what manner I obtain it.”

He went towards the sea, and we began to wonder.

“Since when have men sought for shekels in the waves?” we thought.

Peter stood by the water, and cast the line he had brought. A minute later, he drew out a big fish of the kind you have often seen—one of those that have four barbels on either side of their mouths. He snatched it off the hook, split it from head to tail, and emptied the guts on a rock. Suddenly, in the midst of the blood and slime, he caught sight of a coin. We looked at each other in dumb amazement as Peter took it carefully between finger and thumb, flourished it in our faces, and said :

“You are witnesses ! I found it in the first fish I

caught, exactly as the Master had foretold !—A stater—it is worth two half-shekels, and will pay the tribute to the Temple for the Master, and for me ! ” And with the coin in his hand, the fish in his wallet, he left us standing speechless by the rock where the guts slowly dripped blood.

“ Why did Peter bring Thomas and me ? ” I thought. “ Why were we chosen ? Did the Rabbi order him to bring us ? ”

“ A miracle for us alone ! ” murmured Thomas.

“ For us alone ! ” I murmured.

And both of us were struck by the same thought ! . . . Suddenly, I assumed a resolute air, and said :

“ Listen, Thomas, you are close to the Rabbi. You can explain to me what I cannot understand. What is faith ? ”

He lowered his eyes, sat down, and hid his face in his hands.

“ What does it mean *to believe in him* ? ”

I waited, but he made no answer.

“ Does it mean believing he is good, that he has the power to heal, and *does* heal ? Or does it mean believing he is sent by God to bring about the Kingdom ? . . . Or else, does it simply mean believing in him, as we believe in God, without asking ourselves, or seeking to know, who he is ? ”

Thomas remained silent, his head bowed in his hands.

“ Did the prophets of old also say : ‘ You must, before all else, believe in me ? ’ I went on.”

He replied slowly—oh, so slowly :

“ The prophets said : ‘ Thus spake the Lord, thy God ! ’ ”

At last, he raised his head, rose, and went with dragging steps towards Capernaum.

I followed him at a distance.

“Thomas doubts ! An apostle doubts !” I repeated to myself.

.

Next day, the Master spoke in the synagogue. I was at the extreme end, too far to hear him very distinctly, and so shaken that I scarcely listened. It seemed there had been a second miracle of loaves while I had been on my way back to him. He must have alluded to it, but I only caught a few scattered words :

“The Bread of Life . . . The Bread of Heaven . . . This is the word of God that you believe in him whom He hath sent . . . Our fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and they are dead . . . None shall come unto me unless my Father in Heaven send them unto me . . .”

“Did I not come to him of my own free-will ?” I thought. “Did not our Father in Heaven lead me to Jesus ? Then why does God no longer knit me to him ?”

I tried to listen anew. But I could not concentrate.

“The Rabbi is speaking,” I said to myself. “He is speaking, and you are not listening ! You said to yourself only yesterday : ‘When you are once more in his presence, you will not doubt.’ Now he stands before you, you love him as you have always loved him, and still you doubt ! . . . What do you doubt ?”

Some of those who stood near me muttered :

“We knew him when he was a carpenter ; now he says he has descended from Heaven !”

Others folded up their *talet*,¹ and cried indignantly as they went out :

“This is a hard saying ; who can hear it ?”

Before Jesus had finished speaking, the synagogue was empty. As I stood in the court, I heard his voice say to the apostles :

¹ Praying-shawls.

“ Will ye also go away ? ”

“ Where shall we go, Lord ? ” answered Peter. “ Thou hast the words of eternal life. We believe and are sure that thou art God’s Chosen.”

The Voice made answer :

“ Have I not chosen you twelve ? Yet one of you is a devil ! ”

There was a devil amongst the Twelve. A devil ! How could the Master have chosen a devil ?

“ It must be Thomas,” I told myself. “ The Master knows he has doubted ! . . . But if he calls Thomas a devil, what will he call me ? ”

.

To avoid being spied on, we went round the northern side of the lake, and from thence into the Land of Hippos ; we crossed the Yarmukh. We did not even touch Gadara or Pella, but came to Peræa where the Rabbi, I believe, had never stopped for long. There he again showed himself in towns and villages. Pharisees questioned him about marriage, riches, the greatest of all the commandments, and the life everlasting, and he gave them the answers that he had already given elsewhere. He related parables : the importunate friend, the unjust steward, the talents, and the building of the tower. He restored sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, cast forth devils from the possessed, and as in former days, numbers followed him. To these, he said :

“ Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them ; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them ! ”

Or :

“ I tell you of a truth there be some standing here

which shall not taste of death till they see the Kingdom of God ! ”

But why did I feel so faint-hearted ? Had I grown as impatient as those who complained that the Kingdom tarried too long ? We had been told it was so near at hand ! Yet all that we were promised now was that some of us should see it . . . when the rest of us were dead !

But where should I be then ? Amongst the living or the dead ?

Before Beth Nimrah, where the brook Gedor flows into the plain, mothers brought their children to the Rabbi that he might lay his hands on their heads. I and some of the disciples sought to turn them away, but the Master rebuked us. In a voice like music, he said :

“ Suffer the little children to come unto me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven. Verily I say unto you that whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein ! ”

And I thought : “ How shall I become as a little child ? ”

CHAPTER XVI

WE WERE NOW GOING towards the Jordan. Was Jesus leading us to Jerusalem where his life had been attempted ?

Thoughts crowded into my mind as I walked along. But it is dangerous to think ; though we know how our thoughts begin, how can we tell where they will lead !

One morning, Judas said to me :

“ Near here, John used to baptise the people.”

And in true guide fashion, he pointed out the cave where John was wont to retire, the fig-tree beneath whose boughs Nathaniel had said : “ What good thing can come out of Nazareth ? ” and led me to the Ford of Baptism where the river broadens.

Jesus and his apostles looked at the water. Judas watched me covertly. But the heavens did not open ! No white dove came down ! No Voice repeated : “ This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased ! ”

I chose a resting-place by the reeds. Judas lay down at my side, but I tossed and turned restlessly on my cloak.

“ What is happening ? ” I thought. “ Does the Rabbi perform fewer miracles ? Is he not the same Jesus who saved you ? Nothing is changed ! You love him as dearly as ever ! You would die for him ! Will your spirit doubt for ever because of that one night when your eyes beheld the spectres of their own creation, and some madness in your brain begot doubt ? . . . Do you really know what it means to doubt ? You do not doubt ; you seek to understand. That has always been your sin ! Why do you seek to understand ? ”

I closed my eyes. . . . If he was the Messiah, from whom had he learnt it, and when? Was it during his childhood at Nazareth, or later, at his baptism, or later still, at Jerusalem?

I opened my eyes. . . . Was he the Messiah already, or would he become the Messiah? If he was sure he would be the Messiah, why did he hide it? Was he afraid?

I tried to close my eyes. . . . And whose Messiah was he? Was he the Messiah of Baruch the Zealot, or the Messiah of Reuben the Essene? Or the Messiah of Uncle Simeon the Pharisee? Or the Messiah of Judas Iscariot?

I could not keep my eyes shut. . . . From Aunt Sephora down to the hermit in the cave, all and sundry quoted verses from the Scriptures to prove that he was *their* Messiah! Who was right—who wrong? What was there to show me who was right, and who wrong? For all I could prove to the contrary, they might every one of them be wrong; the Master might be a totally different Messiah from every one of those the world awaited? . . . But then, why did he not say so? We should at least know what to believe! . . .

I tried to stop thinking. . . . And his prayers in the wilderness! His communings with God on the mountain! What he did say to God when they were alone, face to face? When he called Him *my Father*, did he believe he was more God's Son than all other men? Or did he believe he was the Son of Man descended with the clouds of Heaven, of whom Daniel had written, or the Messiah at the foot of God's throne whom Enoch asserted he had seen?

I realised I was deep in thought again:

"But Uncle Simeon says that the Son of Man in the Book of Daniel is Israel—and that the writings of Enoch are false! . . . Suppose the Rabbi had read them?

Suppose that was where he had found his Messiah born before the world began? Could the Master be swayed by writings—by false writings?”

And I reiterated :

“Can a man be more than a man? Are there not worlds between God and man? And when he imagines he is almost God, or God Himself, might it not be that he is possessed by a devil, as his enemies assert—or that he has lost his wits, as his family maintain?”

So you see, my dear sir, all those questions about Jesus that you ask yourself to-day, you who believe you are connoisseurs on the subject of Jesus, we were already asking ourselves during his life-time! But though we did not wait for you to propound them, we are still waiting for you to resolve them! Since then, your Renans, Loisy and Goguel—armed with quill and fountain-pen—have probed minutely into the soul of Jesus to get down to what you call his psychological make-up, in order to trace—I forget your term for that—the evolution of his Messianic consciousness! . . . You will admit I am less ambitious! I do not even attempt to explain Jesus to you: in the first place, I should have to understand him! I merely describe the effect he had on me, on others, on this person and that, and on his friends and enemies. Explain him from these reactions if you can. Personally, I have no intention of undertaking the task.

Do you realise this? Jesus is a mystery, just as Israel is a mystery! And when you put these two mysteries together, shall I tell you what they make? A third mystery, even more mysterious in itself than the sum of the two!

.

But that night, on the bank of the Jordan, I still imagined that I would be able to understand. I tossed and turned ; sleep would not come. As I lay wakeful, Judas began to talk to me—he oozed friendship !

“ You doubt—I have been aware of it for a long time,” he said. “ Have I not given you proof enough ? Are not the texts I have quoted from the Writings enough ? Do you need more ? Listen, then, to what I have seen—and you will believe ! ”

“ I am listening.”

“ On the eve of that day when you found us at the foot of Mount Tabor, you remember, the Rabbi had taken Peter, James and John apart from the rest. Always the same three ! He led them to the top of the mountain. I felt there was something they were about to learn ! Whatever it was, I wanted to learn it, too. Had I not as much right as they ? Are they more faithful than I ? Are they more versed in the texts and Writings ? No, of course not ! Why, then, should they go up with the Master, and not I ? Do you know what I did ? I crept behind them, taking good care not to be seen, till we reached the top. I stared into the darkness ; the night was moonless and starless, and black clouds lowered in the sky. . . . Jesus was praying . . . and as he prayed . . . how can I explain it to you ? . . . his face was transfigured ! ”

“ Transfigured ? ”

“ His robe grew white as if it were irradiated, and the light that streamed from it was so bright that I could see the colours of the flowers and grass at his feet. . . . And then, at his right and left, Elijah and Moses appeared. . . . ”

. . . Could this be Judas who spoke ? His voice seemed to come from beyond him, as if it were a disembodied

voice. . . . I don't know how to describe it to you . . . it was like a voice from the unseen !

" Yes, Elijah and Moses ! I recognised them at once. Elijah wore his leather girdle, like that of the Baptist, and I knew Moses by his long beard, and by the two rays of light that sprang from his head . . . they spoke to him, and he to them ! "

" You heard them ? "

" As distinctly as I hear you. But I could not tell what they said. Their words were filled with a kind of music that I could not understand. And what do you think the other three, the three fools, were doing all this while ? They were sleeping ! And when they awoke, they were tremulous with fear ! . . . They did not know what to say ! They suggested that they should make three tabernacles, one for Moses, one for Elijah, and the third for the Rabbi ! Yes, this was all their wondrous intelligence brought forth ! . . . And then a cloud overshadowed Jesus, Elijah, and Moses—they were hidden in its darkness. And a Voice from on high said : ' This is My beloved Son : hear him ! ' Ah, how that Voice resounded—how each word resounded ! . . . I trembled behind the rock where I lay concealed, and the rock itself trembled ! . . . Peter, James and John had flung themselves face downwards on the ground. . . . He drew near them, and said : ' Arise, be not afraid. . . . ' I looked again : Moses and Elijah had vanished—there was only Jesus ! . . . Now do you understand ? "

But I did not understand !

" All that has been prophesied is being fulfilled. The righteous who sleep in Abraham's bosom descend from Heaven, through the power of Jesus, to dwell on earth ! And he himself is about to dwell—as we ourselves will soon dwell—in Heaven ! I saw ! I heard ! Surely you can doubt no longer ! "

“No longer !” I echoed.

But inwardly I murmured :

“He has but created phantoms in the shadow as I myself created them in the moonlight !”

And I still doubted.

.

The following day, between Jericho and the Jordan, we crossed the welter of craters and crevasses that is like a turbulent sea of rocks, a hurricane turned to stone by an evil spell.

We had halted for food at the bottom of one of those huge, sandy hollows that look as if they had been scooped out of desolation. I thought of Sodom and Gomorrha.

“Will a day come when Capernaum and Bethsaida whom he cursed, will be gaping pits like these ?” I wondered.

Jesus was rebuking Peter in a low voice. Suddenly, he rose to go and, in a ringing voice so that all might hear him, said :

“The Son of Man must suffer many things. He will be put to death ! . . .”

I cannot express what I felt when I heard those words :

“ . . . He will be put to death, and after three days, he will rise again ! ”

It was as if the hand that had kindled and put out all those extinct volcanoes around me had simultaneously filled my veins with icy water, and heaped flames on my head ! The Son of Man, the Son of God, would die !

As though through a mist of blood, I saw poor Peter clutch the Rabbi's cloak, hold him back, entreat him. But Jesus repulsed him :

“Get thee behind me, Satan !”

And to the others, he cried :

“Whosoever will save his life shall lose it ; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall save it ! ”

Trembling, the disciples and apostles followed him. Some of them said :

“The Messiah, the King of Power and Glory, must suffer—why ? He must be put to death—why ? And what does he mean when he speaks of rising again after three days ? ”

Amongst the others was Euphorbius, the Greek from Alexandria whom Doeg had gone to convert, you know. Far from finding the last pronouncement of the Master mysterious, he wondered at the wonder of the rest.

“Osiris is dead, and so is Adonis ! ” he said. “Ever since I was first initiated into the Mysteries of the *Goyim*, I have seen many gods die, and rise again ! As Jesus is a god—and he is a god—why should he not die as they did ? And what is to hinder him from rising on the third day ? Naught could be simpler to a god ! ”

In a state of stupor, I leaned against a rock. Thomas looked at me, Judas looked at me, and I murmured to myself :

“The son of David who was to have reigned over Israel, over all the world—Jesus, my Jesus, they will put him to death ! ”

“Let us go and die with him ! ” said Thomas.

Yet, simultaneously, it seemed that in some inexplicable way, his eyes were crying to me :

“Your Jesus ? He himself no longer believes in his Kingdom ! Every night, he promised it to us on the morrow, and now that it still delays, he promises it to us after his death ! . . . We have long to wait ! ”

Judas had linked his arm in mine. He forced me to go with him. Thomas followed in silence, but as we walked along, Judas broke into speech. He was volubility itself.

“Did you hear the fools ? They understood nothing ;

they will never understand ! When the Rabbi announced the Sign of Jonah to them, did he not say exactly what he has said to-day ? Jonah passed three nights in the belly of a whale, and then came forth : Jesus will pass three nights in the bowels of the earth, and will then come forth ! ”

“ But why must he suffer ? Why must he die ? ”
I protested.

“ So that the Scriptures may be fulfilled ! Have I not told you so again and again ? . . . Oh, I myself was taken by surprise when three weeks ago, near Banias, the Rabbi first spoke of these things ! A Messiah who must suffer and die—that was an entirely new idea. No one had ever voiced it. Suddenly, the conception struck me as magnificent ! But how could I judge aright unless I knew whence it had originated ? There must be some text—there always is a text ! Jesus had found it—why should I not find it ? And I did find it ! Would you like to hear it ? Listen : *Despised and rejected ; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief . . .* The Messiah who suffers is in Isaiah ! And further on : *He was cut off out of the land of the living. . . . He made his grave with the wicked.* The Messiah who dies is in Isaiah ! And now shall I show you the Messiah who triumphs ? ”

And he quoted, and exulted—you should have seen him exult ! Jesus could suffer, Jesus could die—it was all in the Scriptures !

But I grew angry.

“ Why should he not triumph straightway ? ” I asked.

“ How many more times must I tell you ? So that the Scriptures may be fulfilled ! Once and for all, so that the Scriptures may be fulfilled ! Must I recite the entire chapter to you ? *Surely he has borne our sufferings, and carried our sorrows ! . . . The chastisement of our peace was upon him. . . . The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity*

of us all. . . . He delivered himself to death as a sacrifice for sin . . . as a sacrifice for sin ! . . . Do you understand ? As a sacrifice for sin ! . . . So far, what have we had to expiate our sins with contrite hearts ? The victim on the altar, the scapegoat of Kippur, the Paschal lamb ! But it is lovelier by far if one who is sinless offers himself in expiation of our sins ; if the Messiah—the Messiah himself, do you hear ?—gives his life to hide all our iniquities from the sight of God ! That—that is what the Rabbi means to do ! That is how the Scriptures will be fulfilled ! Our sins delay the Kingdom : he will take all our sins upon himself ! He will die for us, he will rise again, and the Kingdom will come ! ”

Ah, how Judas exulted. Everything was fitting together so neatly, Jesus with the texts, the texts with Jesus ! And Judas laughed gleefully.

But I did not laugh. I wept.

“ O Lord, our God,” I entreated, “ if the Messiah must suffer, if the Messiah must die, spare Jesus—seek another Messiah ! Oh, if only Jesus, my Jesus, might not be the Messiah ! ”

CHAPTER XVII

We were close to Bethany. He repeated :

“That Jesus might not be the Messiah” . . . that had become my prayer. If he were the Messiah, he would die ! I no longer dreaded my unbelief ! I *would* not believe he was the Messiah !

That time when he brought Lazarus back from the dead. . . . Can you see Bethany ? Can you see those cupolas whose half-moons rise beneath the moon ? . . . One night, certain men came thence to the Jordan with tidings for the Master from Mary and Martha that their brother lay sick. Two days later, the Master said to us :

“Lazarus is dead. Let us go to him.”

We set forth. We had passed Jericho . . . but to draw near to Bethany meant that we drew nearer to Jerusalem. And at Jerusalem . . .

Look. Here are the two roads that intersect, and quite close by stands the chapel that was built in memory of the meeting. We came by this path, Martha by the other. She was hidden from me by those in front, but I could hear her voice :

“Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother would not have died.”

“Thy brother shall rise again,” said the voice of Jesus.

“Will he bring Lazarus back to life ?” I thought. “Will all the dead come forth from their graves, as the hermit foretold ? . . . Oh, then he would surely be the Messiah ! But if he were ! . . .”

When Martha returned with Mary, and all the friends who had come down from Jerusalem to comfort them,

I found myself with Thomas—I knew not quite how it had come about—at the head of the cortège.

“Where have you laid him?” asked Jesus, and both sisters made answer :

“Lord, come and see.”

“He loved Lazarus dearly,” whispered some of those behind me, and others murmured :

“How could he, who opened the eyes of the blind, have suffered the eyes of Lazarus to close?”

Martha, Mary, and Mary Magdalene walked with the Master. I followed with Thomas along this very road where you and I are now walking. And we were followed by the rest.

There was no sign of the infants’ school that stands here to-day. The entrance of the cave was round the other side, and level with the ground. Now you have to go down spiral-steps. . . . Shall we go down? . . . It’s dark, isn’t it? . . . Wait, I have a candle . . . only five more steps . . . three . . . one . . . we’re down now . . . look, the sepulchre’s right at the end . . . the stone lay on it . . . Jesus made us stand before it—Thomas and myself . . . the women remained outside with the rest.

“Take away the stone,” he commanded us.

Take away the stone? But, if Lazarus arose! . . .

“He has been dead four days,” said Mary. “Lord by this time he stinketh!”

I remember how, as I stooped, I was assailed by the odour of decay. He lay there, a white shape in his white shroud. . . . A white cloth hid his face . . . a strip of white was bound under his chin, his arms were strapped to his body, his legs tied together with strappings of white. . . . I had a vision of myself lying rigid on my pallet in the house of my Uncle Simeon.

“You, too, are paralysed!” I said to the dead man. “Remain paralysed for ever! . . . Let him not bring

you back to life ! Let him not bring the dead back to life ! . . . If he is the Messiah, to-morrow he will be dead, even as you are now ! ”

Then Jesus cried :

“ Rise, Lazarus ! Come forth ! ”

What was it that flowed through my body, into my veins, into my very bones ? I knew—I had felt it flow through me, the power that had raised me from my litter on Simon-Peter’s roof-top ! But to-day it was raising up, not the quick, but the dead ! . . . Slowly, slowly . . . first, the head with the white covering stirred . . . an answering ripple ran from the nape of the neck, down the spine, under the ribs. . . .

“ Unbind him,” said Jesus.

Unbind him ? . . . But if I unbound him . . .

I lifted the white napkin from the face. Why did I lift it ? If I had left it there, would the eyes have remained shuttered ? . . . But with this very hand that now holds the candle, I lifted the white napkin. . . . I saw the face that had turned green, saw a flush creep slowly back to those livid cheeks ! And the lids that had rotted away opened ! Sight returned to the gaping sockets—they were filled with a look of vacant wonder into which understanding suddenly dawned !

And then, Thomas and I unwound the wrappings, the endless wrappings ! Ah, why did I unwind them ? From the arms . . . legs . . . feet . . . and in those arms, legs, and feet there was something that quivered, strove, willed !

Arise ! Take up thy bed, and walk ! . . . Arise ! Take up thy bed, and walk !

Lazarus did not take up his bed. But he arose. . . .

That which had lain motionless was suddenly erect ! . . . That which was erect moved, went forth from the sepulchre ! . . . Why did I let him go forth ? Ah, how

they shrieked, those who had waited outside, as he went forth ! How they fled ! Were they all about to die because Death had come to life ? . . . And Jesus ? Where was Jesus ?

Down there ! He was going towards Bethany. And the dead man went quietly at his side, erect on his feet that carried him along. The dead man was talking to Jesus !

What was he telling him ? Was he telling him what he had seen in the other world ? . . . Had not Jesus seen that other world before he had seen it ? Would he not see it again before he saw it ? . . . The dead man spoke ! The dead man walked ! . . . And Thomas wept ! Thomas believed ! . . .

And I—was I going to believe once more ? I *would* not believe ! Would Jesus bring all the dead to life, all those who slept in the dust, all those who slept in Abraham's bosom ? Would he destroy all the armies with the breath of his lips ? Would the gates of the Kingdom of God open at a sign from him ?

But then, he would be the Messiah ! And if he were ! . . .

CHAPTER XVIII

Once more the man fell silent. We were slowly climbing the path that leads from El-Azarieh to El-Tur. At the top of the Mount of Olives, he seated himself on a knoll, and I followed his example. For what was probably to be the last time, I gazed at that valley, now bright with moonlight, whose stones are sepulchres where the dead have come from all parts of the world to await the Last Trump ; I gazed at the walls, whose girdle of battlements surrounds the pinnacles, terraces, vaults, arcades, dungeons and domes of the city that has so often arisen from its own ruins ; I gazed at the grassy ledge that seemed so close, with its avenues of trees, its fountain, its porticoes open to the sky, and, above the octagon of columns, at the blue cupola of the graceful mosque that is built over the sacred rock. He began to speak again :

You see the Dome of the Rock ? Do you know that I was there when the Caliph dedicated it to his Mahomet ? I was there a few centuries earlier, when Justinian brought the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost within those walls !—and a few centuries earlier still, when the Emperor Hadrian installed Minerva, Juno, and Jupiter Capitolinus ; how many gods have been set up in this place ! But in spite of all those that have been placed and replaced there, one alone remains : the first occupant, He whom no one has ever seen ! . . .

Ah, to visit Jerusalem, and the Temple ! What joy I should have felt in the days when I listened to the stories told by my cousins on their return from the Festival ! But when Judas led me thither, on the morning after the raising of Lazarus, he said to me, as he rubbed his hands :

“ We are going to see how the land lies, you and I !

We must find out whether those in the city are ready to receive the Master as befits the Messiah ! ”

A shudder ran through me. The whole of the way he continued to babble :

“ Jesus has plainly told us that, in order to become the Messiah, he is prepared to die ! Only—have you not noticed ?—he would far rather be the Messiah and live ! . . . Even at Nazareth ! Do you remember what the old *hazan* said ? When Jesus was dragged towards that dark ravine between the two mountains, what did he do ? He fled ! . . . And at the Temple during *Succoth* ! The Elders sent the Guards to seize him, but he purposely held forth to them in such a way that they dared not lay hands on him ! And when he spoke so strangely that his only answer was a shower of stones, instead of availing himself of the chance to die there and then, he stole away with all the speed he could muster ! . . . And at *Chanukah* he had an even better opportunity ! ”

“ *Chanukah* ? ”

“ Do you not know what took place at *Chanukah* ? Oh, of course, you had gone back to your uncle. Well, he was walking in the sanctuary beneath Solomon’s Portico when certain men of Jerusalem said to him : ‘ How long dost thou make us to doubt ? If thou art the Christ, tell us plainly.’ To which Jesus replied this, that, and the other, that he and his Father were one, that the Father was in him, and he in the Father. Whereupon they cried : ‘ Thou blasphemest ! Thou, who art a man, makest thyself God ! ’ He might have answered with those words that are written of the righteous, and of the Messiah : *They shall be named with the name of the Eternal*—but the stones cut him short ! . . . ”

“ They stoned him again at *Chanukah* ! ”

“ Yes, and again he chose to fly rather than die ! I cannot understand ! If he is so desirous of giving his life

for the salvation of the world, why does he not avail himself of such golden opportunities ? Is he waiting for a still more auspicious occasion ? We shall soon know ! ”

I had already sensed his envy of Peter, James and John because the Master preferred them to him. But did Judas also envy the Master himself ? If he did, why did he continually prove to me from the texts he carried with him that Jesus was the Messiah ? Was his belief in Jesus merely founded on *texts*, and apart from those *texts*, did he hate him ?

.

When Judas and I came to this spot, we stooped and kissed the dust : it was the custom to do so as soon as the Temple came in sight. We sat down on this very knoll where you and I are sitting to-night. Judas, of course, insisted on pointing out the various places of interest :

“ Do you see that dark streak below the wall ? That is the Kedron ! And the water down there at the far end ? The Pool of Siloam ! And within the walls, that valley lined with houses ? The Tyropæon Valley ! And right at the top, those green circles with the three great towers ? That is Herod’s Palace ! ”

He pointed out the Xystus, the arcaded bridge, the market-place, the Antonia Tower, and the Bezetha quarter. . . .

But I did not heed him. I thought : “ That is Jerusalem, where they have already stoned him twice ! ”

Judas went on and on. He pointed out the Court of the Goyim,¹ the Court of the Cohanim,² the Court of the Women, and the Court of Israel. He estimated the cost of the marble pavements, the marble columns, the golden façade, the golden roof, the golden doors that

¹ Gentiles.

² Priests.

were so heavy that it took two hundred men to open them, and the golden candlestick whose weight was such that twelve hundred arms could not lift it !

But I thought : " That is the Temple ! The Temple where Jesus is resolved to die ! . . . "

Nearby, two pilgrims talked to one another, their voices charged with disillusion, and in spite of myself, I listened.

" You bring your offering to God," said one, " but the High Priest devours it ! "

" Yes," the other made answer. " He eats the whole of the sin offering, and the whole of the trespass offering. . . . "

" But he only eats the breast and shoulder of the thanksgiving offering . . . "

" That chance to be the choicest portions ! "

" He takes the first-fruits of our corn, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and honey. . . . "

" And after the first-fruits, the first tithe, and after the first tithe, the second tithe . . . "

" And after the second tithe, comes the redemption of vows ! . . . "

" The redemption of theft . . . "

" And the redemption of the first-born . . . "

" Of the firstling male of the beast without blemish for which you pay him in kind . . . "

" And the firstling male of the beast with blemish for which you pay him in money . . . "

" And the redemption of the first-born son for which he exacts five shekels ! "

I gazed mechanically at the Temple, blinking my eyes. It rose from its marble courts that gleamed in the sunlight, like a mountain of gold on a field of snow. Amidst the white columns, a single black column arose

from the altar : a column of smoke. And as I watched it rise, I remembered the stories Aunt Sephora had told me.

Beneath the rock of the altar, the heart of Adam was buried ! Noah had landed by it after the Flood ! Isaac had been bound there, when the Holy One, blessed be His Name, had refused to accept him as a sacrifice ! . . .

But while the two pilgrims complained on my right, to the left of Judas, a young shepherd sang a ribald song about those families of worthy Sadducees to whom the worthy Romans sold the exploitation-rights of the Temple :

*“ Woe is me, House of Boëthos ! Woe is me, House of Annas !
Woe is me, House of Phabi ! Woe is me, House of
Kantharos !*

*They are all High Priests ; their sons are treasurers ;
Their sons-in-law are inspectors of the Temple ;
And their servants belabour the people
With blows of their staves ! ”*

The smoke rose continuously from the square white rock of the altar, and I thought :

“ Are they going to sacrifice Jesus on the rock where the sacrifice of Isaac was not accepted ? ”

.

After the purifications at the Fountain of David, Judas and I entered the outer sanctuary. Did we go in by the Hulda Gate, or that of Coponius, or a third, or a fourth ? Do not alarm yourself, I am not Flaubert, and I am not going to describe the Temple ! All I remember is an overpowering impression of vastness . . . a terrace twelve hundred feet long and nine hundred feet wide, topped by nearly a mile of colonnades ! I am not very well up in styles, or in architecture, but Herod, so-called the Great, had re-built the Temple in the *Græco-Roman*

manner, as you call it, rather more *Roman* than *Græco*, which was about as becoming to our God and the God of our fathers, as the motor-coaches drawn up at the entrance are to Nôtre Dame !

Have you ever been to Lourdes ? Yes ? . . . Then do you remember the dead silence that suddenly stills the sounds of pain from that vast gathering of sufferers, cripples and fever-stricken, the prostration of all those that can prostrate themselves, the utter immobility of those who cannot, at the moment when the priest in his golden vestments elevates the great golden thing that glitters like a lesser sun ? Do you remember the breathless expectancy of the miracle, which is in itself the miracle ? The communion, they call it, do they not—the communion of heaven and earth. Ah, something takes place at that moment—something in which you lose all sense of yourself, and become as nothing ! . . . But a minute later ! The sale of candles and flasks of holy water—the entire bazaar of articles that are vended in the name of God ! And those notices set up by the *charity* of the police to put the *faith* of the faithful on guard against the *hope* of pickpockets ! . . . Well, I had already seen the whole thing from start to finish in the Temple !

First of all, there were the signs that so generously warned the heedless Gentile that if he entered within the second court, he was in danger, not of being cunningly robbed, but of being gently assassinated !

And then the communion. Oh, not the same communion, of course, yet the same in essence all the same !

I had gone as near as was allowed to the gate of the third court. From where I stood, I could see, through the golden doors, the golden tables, the golden altar, and the golden candlestick. At the top of the steps, beneath the golden vine, stood the priests in their ephods and purple girdles. The priest who wore the blue diadem,

and blue ephod, the breast-plate inset with twelve precious stones, and the fringe of bells, pronounced, without pronouncing, the Unpronounceable Name, and stretched his hands over the crowd as if he would bring down God upon Israel. Then the trumpets sounded, and the entire congregation flung itself face downwards on the ground. In that moment, too, something took place ! Was it that heaven descended, or earth ascended ? I do not know, but surely there was a point at which both earth and heaven met ! During that moment, the prayer of Israel made peace, as my uncle used to say, between worlds and worlds, souls and souls, and souls and worlds !

During that moment ! . . . But before ! The moans of the victim that was being bled ! It moaned even though it was given water in a golden bowl to quench its last thirst ! And when it was dismembered and hacked up, and its entrails were washed on the marble tables—in spite of the marble, the meat remained meat, and the entrails entrails ! And the welter of blood on the four horns of the altar ! The legs, sirloins, and under-cuts flung with a turn of the wrist into the flames ; the reek of scorching flesh and burning fat that poisoned the incense which rose from the perfuming-pans ; and the aspiring notes of the Psalms !

And what of the sounds that assailed the ears of those who strolled here and there under the porticoes ! The pigeon-vendors who sold their birds for sacrificial offerings grumbled : “ We’re running our business at a dead loss ! We used to be able to sell our pigeons for a gold dinar, now the price has fallen to a silver dinar ! ” The cattle-merchants complained : “ The inspectors are ruining us ! It’s *so much* to pay before they will certify the beast of canonical age, *so much* before they will certify it has all four hooves, and *so much*, both its eyes ! ” There was the collector of tribute who talked of the crisis : “ What with

all these revolts, famines, and follies, and the taxes imposed by the Romans, just look at the tribute to the Temple—you can't call it business, it's only a miserable three-per-cent at most ! ” There were the money-changers who speculated amongst the pilgrims : “ We buy *didrachmæ*¹ ! We buy *staters*¹ ! We sell *zuzim*¹ ! We sell *selas*¹ ! ” There were the pilgrims who avenged themselves, for having been cheated, by hurling insults : “ You have only given us an *as*,¹ thief and usurer ! Plague take your bones ! ” There were the overseers in charge of the voluntary offerings, who flattered the influential donors : “ Eliezer ben Juda gives three *minas*¹ towards the wood and oil ! Samuel ben Nathan gives ten *minas*¹ towards the curtains ! Ammiel ben Joseph gives a hundred *minas*¹ towards the basins ! ” or else they berated the poor for the small sums they contributed : “ Only a *lepton*¹—where do you expect us to put it ? A *peruta*¹—what do you want us to do with it ? ”

I remembered the words of Jesus : “ You cannot serve both God and Mammon,” and asked myself :

“ Will he be stoned by the cattle-merchants or the pigeon-vendors, the overseers, or the collectors, the inspectors or the money-changers ? ”

And I saw every hand reach out to grasp a stone ! . . .

Amongst those who came and went under the porticoes, there were many who recognised Judas, and asked :

“ Will the Rabbi come up to the Temple for *Pesach*? . . . Ah, he is truly the Prophet ! ”

“ What words he has spoken ! What miracles he has performed ! ”

“ He is more than a prophet ! He is the one whom we await—the Messiah ! ”

¹ Various coins.

"You see," fretted Judas, "the Master even has friends in the Temple ! The people, too, are for him !"

And he spoke of the thousands of Levites reduced to a nominal wage, while the fat Sadducees made huge profits by lending the gold that had been deposited in the Temple cellars, as if in the safes of a State Bank, to the Babylonians and Egyptians . . . all those who had been exploited would uphold Jesus ! They would do their utmost to save him !

"If only they succeed !" I thought.

Near the Treasury, between two swaying turbans, I caught sight of my cousin Baruch among the crowd, in conversation . . . with whom ? Simon the Zealot !

"What fresh plot are they weaving ?" I thought. "Are they still resolved to make him King ? They must not make him King. Better that he were stoned ! If they make him King, what will the Romans make of him ?"

I pushed past beggars, scribes, and shepherds—I wanted to reach Baruch and Simon. But on one of the semi-circular steps that lead to the Gate of Nicanor, I ran into Abdias.

"You !" he shouted in my face. "What of your Rabbi—where have you hidden him ? It seems that he brings the dead to life ! He had better take care : he will find it unhealthy ! The Elders are even now conferring about him. If he shows himself again . . . !"

I heard no more, saw no more ! Judas dragged me out of the Temple. As we climbed the Street of David, he rubbed his hands together, and reiterated :

"The Elders are conferring about him ! The Elders are conferring about him !"

Terror-stricken, I followed him amongst the laden asses, camel-trains, fruit-sellers, water-sellers, cake-vendors, and through the throng of customers that stood before all those shops with which you are familiar ; for

none of these things have changed very much since then.

When we came to a palace in the upper city, Judas said : " Wait."

For what were we waiting ? For what must we wait ?

We had stood there an hour when Nicodemus, wearing a yellow turban, came in sight. He recognised Judas, and drew near to us. He was a shrivelled old man, hardly higher than his beard. Between gasps, he sobbed :

" He must not return ! I can do no more for him ! . . . The raising of Lazarus—they will never forgive him for that, never ! "

He paused to regain his breath. He was shaking from head to foot, his hand trembled like a rag in the wind.

" They fear his miracles ! They are afraid the people will proclaim him the Messiah ! A Messiah is a King ! What would Pilate think of a King over Israel ? . . . Caiaphas said to the assembly : ' If we let this Galilean alone, all men will believe in him. The Romans will come with their armies, and destroy the Temple ! Is it not more expedient for us that one man should die for the people rather than that the whole nation should perish ? ' He must not return ! Tell him he must not return ! . . . If he returns, Caiaphas will deliver him to the Romans ! . . . "

As we passed this place on our way back to Bethany, Judas said, still rubbing his hands :

" All is now in readiness. He has only to show himself, and the Scriptures will be fulfilled ! "

But I looked at the porticoes, the column of smoke, and the rock of the altar. . . .

" Oh, Lord, our God ! " I besought. " Thou who didst refuse the sacrifice of Isaac who was but the son of Abraham—how couldst Thou accept the sacrifice of Jesus, if Jesus is Thy Son ! "

CHAPTER XIX

LAZARUS dwelt in a tall house that had gardens and a tower. When we arrived, these gardens were filled with a throng that cried continuously :

“ The dead brought to life ! The dead brought to life ! ”

They were clamouring for Lazarus, who was not to be seen. Again they shouted :

“ The dead brought to life ! Lazarus ! Lazarus ! ”

At last, Lazarus appeared in the embrasure of his tower.

“ Life unto Lazarus ! Life unto Jesus ! Life unto the Prophet ! ”

Judas had crept into the house through a door at the back. He desired to report to Jesus without delay. But after a few minutes, he returned, his face even redder with fury than his beard.

“ He knew all ! ” he burst forth. “ He knew of the assembly of Elders, and their decision. He knew all before it had taken place ! . . . And where do you think he is going to-night ? . . . To Jerusalem ? For the salvation of the world ? No, he is fleeing—yet one more flight !—to Ephraim, near the desert ! We are going to Ephraim ! ”

“ Oh, if only it were possible for him to flee for ever ! ” I thought. “ If only he can escape death by flight ! . . . ”

But Judas was saying reflectively :

“ No—Jesus is not a coward. . . . If he persists in flight, it must be because there is one more prophecy to be fulfilled ! ”

A prophecy ? . . .

And the whole of the way Judas sought for the text.

We had already passed Anatoth and Gibe'a, and had just left Michmash, when he suddenly smote his forehead.

"Numbered with the transgressors!"

He had found it! I stared at him in terror.

"He will be numbered with the transgressors! There is his text! In Isaiah, as they all are!"

"With the transgressors? Jesus?" I stammered.

"In the Temple at Succoth and Chanukah, you see, he alone was stoned! The Scriptures were not fulfilled! But so that they may be fulfilled, the Master wishes to be taken amongst transgressors!"

"How? Where? When? Amongst what transgressors?"

.

When we reached Ephraim . . .

The man broke off abruptly, and said with irritation:

What is the matter? You seem restless!

"I am!"

Why?

"The flight to Ephraim, the council of the Elders, the raising of Lazarus, the two stonings at the Temple—for one whole hour, you have merely been repeating (in your own somewhat characteristic manner, it's true) the Gospel of St. John!"

I have been telling you what I know! And I know because I was there! If John agrees with me, so much the better for him! Oh, I'm aware of the theory! . . . Jesus is only to be found in the Gospels of Mark, Luke and Matthew! John knew nothing, saw nothing—John was a dreamer! He was a poet of the Symbolist school . . . only, as it happens, the poet who knew nothing, saw nothing, is more exact, more realistic in all his records, than your three prose-writers put together!

"But the speeches you have quoted! The speeches of Jesus in the Gospel of St. John!"

Arranged ? Extended ? Granted. But . . .

"But from the matter, as well as the manner, theologians, Christian theologians, think them very improbable !"

Really ? Other scholars, however, Jewish scholars, Gudemann, Marmorstein, and Abrahams believe, on the contrary, that . . .

"That this John with his mind chock-a-block with Greek thought . . . ?"

Greek thought ! You amuse me with your Greek thought ! Why, this Greek thought was all over Palestine ! It was prevalent in Tiberias, Hippos, Gerasa, Gadara, Bethsaida, Cesaræa, and in fifty Greek towns where the Jews lived with the Greeks—as the Greeks lived with the Jews in Jewish towns, and even in Jerusalem ! Greek thought ! The *upper classes*, the Sadducees and High Priests, in imitation of the Romans, talked Greek, thought Greek—when they thought at all ! Those who had turned away from the Torah were not to be found only amongst the lower classes—on the contrary ! Do you think that the rich Jews would have waited for the time to come when they would live in Paris, like you, to discard Judaism ?

And what of the Greeks who had become Jews, the proselytes like Euphorbius, who compared Jesus with Adonis or Attis ? Do you suppose that in losing their Greek foreskins, they lost their Greek brains ? . . .

And what about the pilgrimages to the Festivals, my dear sir ! Jews came to Jerusalem from all parts of the world. Wouldn't those from Alexandria, for instance, where Philo Judæus already served up the Bible with Greek sauce, have brought a little Greek spice with the Egyptian onions they carried in their wallets ? . . .

And what of Jesus himself ? How do you know what he did, what he read, and what he saw in the years before his ministry ? How can you prove that he himself

was not acquainted with Philo, who was at least twenty years his senior, and the first Judeo-Greek Jew? . . . Moreover, was it necessary to be well versed in Greek in order to pick up those few crumbs of Greek which St. John assimilated?

"Crumbs? The Word? The Logos?"

The Logos! The Logos! The Logos is the Word, the *Memra*, as you know perfectly well! Don't pretend you don't know it! . . .

"Yes, I know that in order not to associate God with mundane affairs, the Divine Name was translated for common use in the synagogue by two words: Memra Adonai! . . ."

Which means? The Word, my dear sir, the Word of God!

"Yes. The world was no longer created by God—that was a task far below His dignity—but by the Word of God. Israel was no longer redeemed by God—but by the Word of God. . . ."

The *Memra*, the Word, the Thing Said, which was already called Logos by the school of Philo!

"Agreed. And this Word also signified Wisdom—the Wisdom of God in the history of Israel; it signified the Torah—the Wisdom of God in the world; and it signified the Schekhina—the Presence of God in the universe . . . All these ideas converged, came together, and merged. . . ."

And would Jesus alone have missed the meaning of this? . . .

" . . . But from that point to a Word made flesh! To a second God, or even to a third, at God's side!"

Have I ever denied that John added something to Jesus? When I saw him for the last time at Ephesus, he was nearly a hundred years old! At that age he might have *hellenised* (as you say in slang, if you speak slang), he might have *hellenised* a thought that was Hebrew in origin . . . (you see? I too can play the professor!). But the Christians merely *hellenised* that which was already

only slightly Jewish before they came along ! They only made dogmas out of our heresies ! . . .

" I can't follow you any further ! . . . "

What ! If Jewish visionaries at the time of Jesus imagined a Messiah born before the world, descending from Heaven, a demi-god, why should not Jesus, if he believed himself to be the Messiah, have attributed to himself what these visionaries attributed to him ?

" Do not let us confuse what Jesus himself thought with interpolations. . . . "

Interpolations ? . . .

" That were added a century later ? . . . "

Later ? Enoch ? The Fourth Book of Esdras ? And all the rest ? And even if they had been a century later, why couldn't Jesus himself have originated something ? Why should the imitators, the apocryphal writers and the spurious writers have had all the genius—and Jesus none ? What if, on the contrary, he had transmitted something like a secret doctrine that he himself had conceived ? . . .

" A secret doctrine ? There's no trace of such a thing in the Gospels ! "

No trace ? . . . No trace in them ? . . .

" Didn't Jesus himself declare that he never hid anything in his teachings ? "

I know ! I was there ! He said so in my presence ! He could not have lied ! . . . But did he never speak of *secrets*, my dear sir, the secrets of the Kingdom ? What did he mean by these secrets ? To the very end, he spoke in parables, even to the Twelve ! He reminded them of those secrets on the very eve of his death. I was there ! I heard ! . . . Could he not have taken a few into his confidence ? The three, for instance, whom he so often took apart ? Above all, John, his favourite ? Thus, John, more than any of the others, ought to seek for Jesus !

"*Sheer romantic rubbish !*"

What's that ? What did you say ?

Now I, too, was angry.

"*I have put up with your truncated quotations, your arbitrary arrangement of things, your anachronisms . . . but when you begin to fabricate . . .*"

Fabricate ? I fabricate ? Listen, sir ! I offered you an interview. You haven't been able to ask me a single question ! And when I answer, irrespective of your question, you cut me short. It's too much of a good thing !

"*But . . .*"

Not another word, please ! Or you'll never know the end of the story !

"*I . . .*"

Another word, and I take my leave ! Is that clear ? . . . What, a cardboard dummy who scribbles books, a Jew who is three-quarters of a Goy and who professes Judaism, a visionary who has never seen a thing, presumes to teach *me*, who saw and heard ! . . . For I *did* hear the mystic dialogue, as you call it.

"*What dialogue ?*"

Yes, I heard it one night when I was with Judas ! . . . Do you give me your word not to interrupt any more ? . . . You don't answer ? Has something upset you ?

"*I'm more curious than furious ! Go on ! Tell your story ! I won't interrupt again !*"

You promise ?

"*I promise.*"

Well, then . . .

With no perceptible pause, he had forgotten his anger.

.

Do you remember Ephraim ? That headland that cuts across the valleys ? . . . One pitch-dark night, they were both there—Jesus and John. Judas had hidden me and

himself in the shadows below. . . . Jesus spoke, and John repeated his words . . . it was like a lesson that a Master teaches, and a pupil learns. . . . In a voice that seemed to come from another world, Jesus said :

“ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . ”

“ Jesus himself said that ? ”

I heard him. He said :

“ The Word was God. And all things were made by the Word, and without it not anything made that was made.”

“ At the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,” John repeated.

In a low voice, Judas explained :

“ As the Name of God is the Word of God, the Word is with God, and the Word is God ; and the Word created all things that were created by God.”

The Voice that seemed to come from another world continued :

“ I am the Light of the World, and the Light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not ! ”

“ And the darkness comprehendeth it not,” echoed John.

And Judas explained in a whisper :

“ The Word is Light ; and the Light is the Messiah. And the Messiah Jesus shone in the darkness, and the darkness has not comprehended him.”

The night enveloped us, enveloped them. And the Voice went on :

“ I am the Bread of Life. I am the Water of Life. Whosoever eateth me and drinketh me shall have eternal life.”

“ Thou art the Bread of Life. Thou art the Water of Life . . . ” echoed John.

“ The Master says of himself that which was said of the Torah,” Judas expounded. “ For the Torah is called Bread, and the Torah is called Water. And the Torah is Wisdom, and the Messiah is Wisdom, and whosoever shall feed thereof shall not fear death.”

“ I am the Good Shepherd ! I am the Lamb of God ! ” said Jesus.

“ Thou art the Lamb of God. . . . Thou art the Good Shepherd . . . ” repeated John.

“ The Master says of himself that which was said of David,” commented Judas. “ He says of himself that which was said of Israel. For David is called the Shepherd, and Israel the Lamb. And as David is the Son of God, as Israel is the Son of God, so Jesus, the Messiah, is the Son of God ! ”

And Jesus continued to teach, and John to repeat his words, and Judas to explain ; and the night listened. Hope was re-kindled in me, for I thought :

“ If he is the Son of God, and if the Son of God is Wisdom, and if Wisdom is Light, and if Light is the Word which created all things—he would have created the world. And if he created the world, he cannot die ! ”

CHAPTER XX

BUT HE COULD DIE, he could die ! . . . Ah, if only we had lain in hiding at Ephraim ! If only we had stayed in that isolation ! If only he had not been resolved to go to the city where death awaited him !

But even at Ephraim, death sought him. Those black-hooded shadows who had attempted to carry him with them, on the night of the miracle of loaves and fishes, to make him King, prowled to and fro at night. Once I caught sight of my cousin Baruch amongst them ! . . . Simon the Zealot, and Judas, too, took part in the conclaves.

One morning, Judas actually said to me :

“ I have spoken to them.”

“ To whom ? ”

“ To the *transgressors* ! ”

“ What transgressors ? ”

“ Those with whom the Master will be taken ! ”

“ And who are they, these transgressors ? ”

“ Hush ! ” muttered Judas, a hairy finger to his lips.

“ I have spoken to them ! ”

Whom could he mean but the Zealots ? Indeed, the Romans called them thieves and bandits. When your Moroccan nationalists attempt to revolt, they also become *bandits*, do they not ? But how could Judas imagine that Jesus was in league with the Zealots ? One might equally well imagine a Gandhi preaching non-resistance to an accompaniment of shrapnel-bursts !

.

When we left Ephraim, we passed to the right of Michmash. Now we were going back towards Jericho.

From the moment of our arrival, I saw that the Master had once more won all hearts to him. I had never heard such greetings since the cries of adoration that had arisen from the shores of the lake when he had preached from the ship. The multitude was so great that Zacchæus, who was of short stature—although he was a great man, a publican !—was obliged to climb a tree in order to see the Master !

At Bethany it was even more amazing. Crowds had flocked from all parts of Judæa, Peræa, Decapolia and Galilee to feast their eyes on Lazarus, the dead who had been brought to life ! So many curious spectators gathered round him to ascertain that he was indeed alive, that Lazarus himself had not a moment's breathing space in which to realise he was living !

This blaze of glory greatly disquieted the High Priests. In their opinion, a dead man ought to remain a dead man, if only out of deference to the established order, and they were determined to suppress the recalcitrant at all costs ! But even if they had succeeded in consigning him to his grave again, this last miracle had restored faith to those who had doubted most. A dead man who had come to life after he had been buried for four days ! It was a sign that the Kingdom would come to-morrow—to-day—at any moment !

In the midst of the re-converted, I encountered my cousin Baruch—yes, Baruch the Zealot ! He no longer let fall mysterious hints, but cried :

“ He will be King, you see—I knew he would be King ! He will drive out the Romans ! ”

A little further on I ran into my cousin Reuben the Essene !

“ *Schalom !* ”

“ *Schalom !* . . . So you, too, have come back, Reuben ? Do you no longer fear to hear him curse ? ”

"No ! He cursed, but it was in order to hasten repentance ! Men have repented, now the Kingdom is at hand !"

And Nahum, the Rabbi's enemy ! He came up to me, and murmured :

"I always believed in him—tell the Good Master I always believed in him ! But he forbade us to call him *good*. 'God alone is good,' he used to say, and forbade us to call him *Master*. Am I to blame, therefore, if I never called him *good*, nor *Master* ?"

And guess who else was there ? My Uncle Simeon ! Yes, my dear sir, the good Pharisee had returned to the good Galilean because he had raised a good man from the dead ! . . . My uncle had brought my aunt, and they had brought my three younger cousins, Nathan, Isaac, and Naaman, so that they might see Jesus !

"Suppose he *were* the Messiah !" muttered my uncle as he tugged at his beard. "After all, it is not impossible !"

And, with a shrug of her shoulders, my Aunt Sephora replied :

"How often have I told you so ! You never listen to me. . . ."

But my ears were still buzzing with the echoes of Nicodemus' terror : "He must not return ! They will deliver him to the Romans !"

As far as the Romans were concerned, it did not matter in the least whether he were the Messiah, whether he wished to be the Messiah, or whether others wished him to be the Messiah. . . . What did matter to them was the fact that a Messiah was a King, a King over Israel, and if he were called the Messiah, they would have to rid themselves of him !

All the stories I had heard when, as a tiny child, I had lain in the mud hovel, one leg thrust stiffly forward, the

other bent back—all those stories of heroes and bandits rushed into my mind. I pictured the Zealots suffocated by the smoke that the Romans poured into the caves where they lay hidden ! I pictured the highways lined with crosses—avenues of crosses ! And I saw Athronga, the shepherd, Athronga, the Messiah—crucified !

.

When I rejoined the Rabbi in the house of Lazarus, Martha was washing his feet. When she had done, she offered him honey and fruits which he refused. She came and went, and gave orders for the comfort of the Master and his apostles. But her sister Mary sat at the feet of Jesus in idleness, and listened to him.

“ My sister has left me to serve alone. Do you not care, Lord ? Bid her, therefore, to help me ! ” complained Martha.

The Master’s thoughts were far away. Was he dreaming of his cross ?

“ Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things,” he made answer. “ One thing only is needful : Mary hath chosen that good part ! ”

What was that one thing needful ? To share in his thoughts of his cross ? Did Jesus truly desire Martha to listen to him, gaze upon him, and take no heed of aught else, like those nuns and monks who even to-day renounce the world, and live only in the contemplation of Jesus crucified ? . . . Sometimes, in the course of my devious wanderings, I have fallen exhausted on the threshold of a convent door. Ah, at such moments, how I envied the life of contemplation ! . . . But I would arise, and go my way ; and in ghetto after ghetto, I would see my poor Jews who, during each hour of the day, associated God with all their tasks : they could contemplate, and, simultaneously, do what had to be done ! . . .

But that afternoon, in the house of Lazarus, the one thing needful of which Jesus spoke—was it not, perhaps, the Kingdom of God that seemed once more to have become so close?

“It will be as it was in the days of Noah, or as it was in the days of Sodom,” said the Master. “Men ate and drank, bought and sold, planted and builded, men married women, women married men—and suddenly God sent down fire and brimstone from Heaven! I tell you that in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken and the other left; two men shall be in the same field; one shall be left and the other taken!”

Then he related the parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins. The Foolish Virgins took their lamps, but took no oil with them; the Wise Virgins had taken oil with them, but would not give any to the Foolish Virgins. And when the Bridegroom came, the Foolish Virgins had gone to buy oil, but the Wise Virgins were ready to receive him, for their lamps were lit! . . .

But how sorrowful the Bridegroom seemed that day! Once again I tried to look at his eyes. They had grown larger, and there was a greater loneliness in their depths. But, as always, my sight grew misted, though it was no longer dazzled by scintillating rays. It was more of a moonlit radiance that streamed from his face, and veiled it from me—a translucency that in some inexpressible way divided him from this world by other worlds, unknown worlds that were known to death!

.

That night, Jesus was to sup at the house of a certain Simon who was still known as Simon the leper, though Jesus had long ago healed him of his leprosy. I found myself in the banqueting-hall, for by chance, or by the

Master's choice, I had been near him ever since I had doubted . . . Thomas and I alone had gone with Peter when he caught the fish with the coin. Thomas and I had been the first to see Lazarus arise from his tomb. Had the Rabbi, who divined all things, divined us too? Did he trouble about a poor soul like mine? Did he wish to help me by keeping me close to him during every moment? How else could I explain the fact that I, who counted nothing to the apostles, was now treated almost as they?

But there were times when I felt no pride in my nearness to the Twelve, for the apostles did not always remember that they were apostles! . . . A few days ago, on the road from Capernaum, Peter, one of the Master's chosen three though he was, had said suddenly to Jesus:

"We have forsaken all to follow thee. What will become of us?"

And to reassure him, Jesus had been obliged to promise the Twelve no more and no less than twelve thrones in Heaven where they should sit in judgment over the twelve tribes of Israel! And as though this prospect were not sufficiently dazzling, he had added:

"Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house or brethren or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands for my sake and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses and brethren and sisters and mothers and children and lands; and in the world to come, eternal life!"

Did they need so much material reassurance? Was Jesus treating them as Moses had treated the Children of Israel? Promises for this world, and the world to come! Ah, these future Christians looked forward to their wages! I know of several to-day who think only of their own salvation, and not of their fellow-men, nor God! . . .

As to his two other favourites, James and John, were

unspecified thrones in Heaven enough for them? No—nothing but reserved thrones would do for them, one on his right hand, one on his left! Their mother, the wife of Zebedee had frankly said as much to the Master when they arrived at Jericho. And I can still hear the thunder of protest from the ten at this thunderbolt of the two *sons of thunder*!

But for some time past, Judas had horrified me more than any of the other apostles. His behaviour during that supper at Simon the leper's house utterly revolted me! Jesus was propped on cushions before his table when Mary Magdalene came in. She held an alabaster box filled with precious ointment, and, going up to the Master, she poured it on his head.

My Aunt Sephora had often told me the story of how Samuel had taken an horn of oil, and anointed David's forehead.

"Mary has done what Samuel the prophet did," I thought. "She has anointed Jesus so that he may be King!"

King! I trembled.

But certain of the disciples deplored such waste. With the price of the perfume they would have been able to help the poor! Although they arrogated heavenly thrones to themselves, they grudged Jesus a few drops of scent! Judas was loudest of all in complaint. He sniffed at the air, and muttered, as he sniffed:

"Genuine spikenard! Scandalous! It must have cost at least three hundred denarii!"

But with infinite gentleness, Jesus said:

"The poor are always with you, but me ye have not always! Why do you blame this woman? If she has poured perfume over my body, it is for my burial!"

Not for his Kingdom! For his burial! . . . Whence came the moonlight that surrounded him? Did it stream

from his eyes, or the tears that sparkled in mine? . . . For his burial! . . . And the Voice that spoke from that radiance—did it already come from beyond the grave? It said :

“Wheresoever the Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her !”

You know those words, don't you? But have you thought about them as much as I? This slight incident took place nineteen centuries ago in a small house in Judæa! In those days, what was Judæa to the world? What were we ourselves? What was Jesus? . . . And the Gospel has been preached world-wide, and the story of what Mary did that night in that tiny house in tiny Judæa is re-told world-wide to-day! When I think of Jesus, that simple story which took place here, and which, as he had prophesied, is now told with his own story the world over, troubles me more, I believe, than all his other prophecies that have been fulfilled. Was old Maimonides right? Did the God of Israel allow this miracle of Jesus in order that the light of Israel might shine—through a glass darkly, at first—over all the world?

.

As we walked back with the Rabbi to the house of Lazarus, Judas also prophesied :

“Remember my texts to-morrow! The Master will be *numbered with the transgressors*—that comes from Isaiah! He will enter into his city like a king, *riding upon the foal of an ass*—you will find that in Zechariah! To-morrow, all the Scriptures will be fulfilled !”

All the Scriptures! . . . I remained alone in the garden. I realised I should be unable to sleep. I kept watch, I knew not for what. And as I watched, I was sure I saw black-hooded figures, Zealots, creep out of the door at

the back of the house ! . . . I was thunderstruck ! Had they, too, been keeping watch until the return of the Master ? Had he received them ? Had he spoken to them ? Must we believe what your Robert Eisler thought he had found in the famous Slav manuscript of his Flavius Josephus ? Had the Zealots, under the impression that Jesus had only to utter a single word to make all things possible, come to ask him to seize the city, crown himself King-Messiah, and drive out the Romans ? Would he not have refused ? . . . How can I prove it ? How can I deny it ? I was not invited to be present at the conclave ! Nor was Eisler, for that matter ! . . . But without the help of the Zealots, accepted or otherwise, without that *insurrection* mentioned by Mark and Luke in their Gospels, would what happened on the morrow have come to pass ?

Ah, that night in the garden ! What thoughts whirled in my brain !

“ To-morrow they will make him King ! But if they make him King, the Romans will seize him ! They will do to him that which they do to Messiahs ! Yet I stand here—I am doing nothing to stem the tide of events ! . . . How can I stop the day from dawning ? ”

Once more, I pictured those crosses along the highways, the avenues of crosses. Every tree in the garden became a cross ; and at the very end, raised aloft, I saw Jesus on a cross !

“ You are resolved to die ! ” I said to him. “ To expiate the sins of men ! How can your death expiate my sins ? And even if your death expiates my sins, live, and leave my sins to me ! . . . You are resolved to die that the world may be saved ! How can your death save the world ? Does God require the blood of one of His sons

to save the rest? . . . you are resolved to die that the world may be redeemed! How can your death redeem the world? Would God barter the world? Is God's coinage your blood? . . . Are you resolved to die because you have read of your death in the Scriptures? What if you misunderstood? What if you are wrong? What if nothing were achieved by your death—what if it could save neither you nor me, nor mankind, nor the world? . . . But it may be that you know your death is of no avail. Are you resolved to die, not to save the world, but because you know that you cannot save it?"

I fell asleep in the midst of the crosses. I dreamt I heard sounds of tumult, as though from a city in uproar. And above the din, I heard Baruch speak, as he had spoken of old in Uncle Simeon's shop:

"We will do what was done under the rule of Archelaus! We will go into the Temple with our cloaks folded closely round us. . . . And once within, we will draw forth our daggers! . . ."

And in my dream, I saw the daggers flash.

"We will seize the Antonia Tower," the voice continued. "The Guards of the Temple will not resist us. . . . We will slay the Romans in the Tower of Siloam!"

And in my dream, I saw the tower, I saw the Romans . . .

.

At daybreak, a rending shock suddenly awoke me. Was the earth splitting asunder to yield up the dead? No, it was the door of the Temple being opened; it made so much noise when it was pushed back that it could be heard as far away as Bethany. . . . But I thought I could hear shrieks mingled with the clangour—had the Zealots gone in with their daggers! Had they taken possession of the tower—of both towers?

Near me in the garden, Jesus was talking to his apostles. He was repeating the dreadful prophecy :

“ All things that have been written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. He shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spat upon. They shall scourge him, and put him to death. . . .”

“ They shall scourge him, and put him to death ! ”
I repeated.

“ But the third day he shall rise again ! . . .”

“ The third day ! ” I murmured inwardly. “ But what if he does not rise again on the third day ? ”

The unseen Voice continued :

“ When I sent you out without purse and scrip and shoes, lacked you anything ? But now he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip : and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one ! . . .”

Sell his garment ? Buy a sword ? That was what Jesus said to them ! And he explained :

“ For I say unto you that this that is written must yet be accomplished : *he was reckoned among the transgressors.*”

The text Judas had quoted, the text he had foreseen that Jesus would quote ! Jesus had quoted it now ! . . .
One of his hearers said :

“ Lord, behold, here are two swords,” and he made reply :

“ It is enough.”

Two swords apiece, no doubt, concealed beneath the cloak of each man, as each Zealot concealed two daggers, were enough !

Oh, I know ! Those swords were not to be drawn on behalf of Jesus ! Subsequently, he rebuked the Galileans who made use of them ! But he was fulfilling the Scriptures, was he not ? *He had to be reckoned among the transgressors !* And to be reckoned among the transgressors,

had not his apostles to be armed with swords, had they not to enter the city armed with swords, and had they not to join the Zealots in the Temple, armed with swords?

Nevertheless, I remembered those words : *sell your garments and buy swords!* I remembered them, for instance, when Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium, offered us death or baptism, and when King Dagobert, who put on his breeches back to front, offered us baptism or death, not even pausing to reverse them ! I remembered them when the pious Crusaders *en route* for the Holy Land *sanctified* their swords in the blood of the Jews before they had *sanctified* them in the blood of the Saracens ! I remembered them when, for the salvation of our souls, Torquemada roasted us at his stakes ; and when Chmielnicki, to amuse his men, tied our feet to the tails of his horses ! I remembered them only the other day when Denikin, Wrangel, and Petliura knouted us, hacked us to bits, hung us from trees like burnt-out lanterns, filled us with petrol which they forced into our mouths and eyes, and buried us alive with our heads above ground. I remember them to-day—yes, even to-day ! I cannot fail to remember them now that Hitler, the Messiah of brute beasts, has restored the wheel and the branding-iron, torture by water, and the garotte ! I cannot fail to remember them now that he has followed up the bloody pogrom with a bloodless pogrom that starves us to death, body and brain ! . . . *Buy swords!* All the Jewish blood that the Christians have spilt can be traced back to those words. . . .

And what about the blood of the Red Indians, the Indians and Chinese ? I remembered those words anew when I saw Cortez convert Mexico, Warren Hastings reform India, and Courbet civilise Tonkin ! . . . And

what of all the Christian blood with which other Christians watered their Christian highways? What of Edward III and his pleasure-trips to France, Charles V and his travels in Italy in pursuit of art, and Napoleon and his winter-sports in Russia! And, in our own time, that record of records: eleven million killed, in round numbers, in celebration of the nineteenth centenary of Christianity! . . .

Are you aware, sir, that I fought in all the armies? Yes, to demonstrate my patriotic zeal to all the countries of my adoption—instead of preventing them from cutting one another to pieces—I could find no more convincing proof than to shoot at my own kind on every front in every front-line trench! It did not make the slightest difference to me whether I was blown to bits by a shell from the Creusot munition factory, or a shell manufactured by Krupp; it did not matter to me whether I crashed in a Japanese 'plane, or went to the bottom in a Russian cruiser! I'm still alive, as you see! I'm harder to kill than war itself! Only, I've been slightly wounded in every part of myself! . . . And there was one night . . . I was with the Hungarians in the vicinity of the Trentino . . . there was a cemetery down below . . . similar to that of Craonne—do you know it? . . . I had gone out with a party of volunteers to cut the barbed wire. Apparently, the Italians did not see eye to eye with us, and fired something into my side that knocked me flat on my back at the edge of the graves, where I lay shivering with fever, near a severed head. . . . From time to time, a flare would rise slowly, hover, and come down. I could not understand why a little stream of blood kept trickling into my eyes. But when the flare was stationary in the sky, I could nevertheless admire the scenery: barbed wire, and gaping black holes. At every shell-burst, skeletons leapt out of their graves—complete, or

in fragments ! Oh, they had nothing in common with Lazarus ! But one must rise from the dead to the best of one's ability ! . . .

Not far away there was a stone Christ on a stone cross. Whenever a flare went up, it would be outlined in a lurid blue glow amidst a hailstorm of sparks, lead, earth and shrapnel. Now it flashed into sight, now it disappeared into darkness as the Very lights shone out and died down. To distract myself, I tried to talk to it :

" My poor Jesus ! Now you see what men do to the world when they are told : ' My Kingdom is not of this world ! ' "

The stone Christ swayed back, drooped forward . . . but now he was bleeding real blood that dripped scarlet over his livid blue body. He was not a stone figure any longer, he was flesh and bone. His lips moved. They attempted to shape words . . . what were they trying to say ? " Love one another " ? It would have been good if men had acted thus two thousand years ago ! But to-day : Do not kill one another ! You will have achieved much, if you do not kill one another !

Now his left arm was missing . . . and now his right hand had gone . . . Now his feet, his legs, his stomach, and his neck had been blown to bits ! . . . Only his head on a splinter of cross remained—a head against my head. And he gasped in my ear :

" Your Jews who delivered me to the Romans . . . to the Romans who crucified me . . . what was I to them ? . . . An impostor. . . . But the Christians, all the Christians in the world ! . . . I am their God : and see what they have done to me ! . . .

And now, not even his head remained. Nothing was left—nothing but scattered fragments of brains that bled slowly under my eyes. . . .

CHAPTER XXI

BUT I SPEAK TOO SOON! We had not come to the Great War, we had just been promised that Peace Everlasting would be proclaimed at round about a quarter to three in the afternoon!

We came this way from Bethany. Jesus walked ahead of us by himself. The apostles followed, two by two, next came the disciples—I was in the front rank. Then came all those who had been drawn to him by the miracle of Lazarus. They were singing Psalms—the hour was so close! We had only to climb the Mount of Olives, go down towards the Kedron, climb the hill opposite, enter into the Temple with Jesus—and we would reach the Kingdom of Heaven!

And yet . . . The apostles were ill at ease. Did they fear the swords they had concealed beneath their cloaks? Or did they fear for the Kingdom itself? If the Master were seized, scourged, and . . . used as he had prophesied, how could the Kingdom come?

Would it come through his sacrifice? But is it a sacrifice to die when one is certain of rising on the third day to sit on the right hand of God? . . . And why must there be this death and resurrection if to faith all things are possible? . . . The Master had offered his life: might God be going to refuse it? Might God be going to bring about the Kingdom without his death and resurrection? . . .

But what if Pilate had already dispatched his armies from Cesaræa? What if the Romans, and not the Zealots, awaited us in the Temple? What if all of us were slain? . . . Why was I here with these madmen who

thought themselves stronger than Rome? Had not the Master warned us this morning: "If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross . . ." Would there be a cross for him, a cross for all his followers, a cross for me?

Already I could feel the nails of the cross in my wrists and ankles! . . . Thomas turned round, and motioned to me:

"The Master is calling us—do you not hear him?"

He was calling Thomas, the doubter, whom he took, perhaps, for a devil. He was calling me, the other devil! He was calling both of us! Why?

"Go in front, and when you come to the village, you will find a foal. Unloose it, and bring it hither."

The foal of an ass! The foal in Zechariah! . . . the text that Judas had quoted! Another prophecy was being fulfilled! But if all the prophecies were fulfilled . . . Had Judas spoken the truth? . . . The Master! . . .

We found the ass in a street in Bethphage, fastened to the door of a house. We laid our cloaks on its back to make a saddle, and Jesus mounted.

Now the apostles went in front. Then came Jesus on the ass, with Nathaniel and myself on either side. The disciples walked behind us, followed by the singing crowd.

Ah! When we reached this spot, and the Temple and the city came in sight, I was filled with wonder at what I saw! Were there still embrasures on the battlements? I could see nothing but hands that waved green branches. Below, in the valley whose stones are sepulchres, it seemed that the dead had arisen, and transformed it to a forest of swaying boughs! All along the road that winds up and down, the people had spread their garments, and strewed the ground with green leaves. The road

wound up and down, carpeted with bright stuffs, and garlanded with green.

Suddenly joy sprang up in my heart, as if it would take shape, and dance before me across the carpets and the boughs. Nothing seemed impossible to this new-found joy. The Master need not suffer and die to bring about the Kingdom ! He could destroy all the armies with the breath of his lips, gather together those who were scattered to the four corners of the earth, change the hearts of men, and change the world !

But Jesus was weeping over Jerusalem.

“ The day shall come upon thee when thine enemies shall compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side. And because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation, they shall lay thee even to the ground, and thy children within thee ! They shall not leave in thee one stone upon another ! ”

Jerusalem would not understand ? Jerusalem would be laid waste ? . . . I would not listen. The disciples acclaimed Jesus. They now said openly in daylight what they had muttered in darkness ; they were about to proclaim from the house-tops what they had whispered in shadowy caves. Already, they were shouting :

“ Hosanna ! Hosanna ! . . . Blessed be the Kingdom that cometh from David, our father ! Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord ! . . . ”

Yes, it was indeed as the son of David, as a King that they glorified him ! What would the Romans do ? Behind us, Abdias and Bathuel murmured fearfully :

“ Master, make thy disciples hold their peace ! ”

But he replied :

“ If they hold their peace, the stones will immediately cry out ! ”

And other multitudes who came forth from the city to meet him, likewise shouted :

“ Hosanna ! Hosanna ! Son of David ! . . . Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord ! . . . Blessed be the King of Israel ! ”

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The nearer we drew to the Temple, the greater grew my joy ! All would be transformed ! Each vine would put forth a thousand branches, each branch a thousand grapes, each grape a thousand seeds ! A new Jerusalem, built of sapphires, beryls and precious stones, would descend from on high, and a new Temple would arise, shaded beneath the Tree of Eden ! The scattered tribes of Israel would flock together from the ends of the earth, and all nations would praise God, walk in His righteousness, and observe His law ! All the kingdoms would become one Kingdom, and peace would hold sway over all the earth ! With my own eyes, I should see the Master seated in judgment over the quick and the dead, throned in Heaven amongst his angels at the right hand of God ! Did he, too, hope that the Kingdom would come without his sacrifice ? I heard him murmur :

“ Now ! . . . Now ! . . . ”

And again I felt the vibration of that power that emanated from him, the power that had uplifted my rigid body, that could heal all the sick, raise up all the dead, move all the mountains ! How could he have felt doubt, he to whom nothing had been impossible ? His words had brought every miracle to pass : why should they not bring about the last miracle of all ?

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Ah ! if you could have seen him when he dismounted from his ass, and entered the Temple where the cattle-merchants were bargaining with the inspectors, and the money-changers cried : “ Who sells *didrachmæ* ? Who sells *staters* ? Who buys *selas* ? Who buys *zuzim* ? ” . . .

How he laid about him with his whip, and brought it down on the merchants and their oxen ! Man and beast fled frantically under the colonnades ! . . . The seats of the vendors were overturned, the tables of the money-changers overthrown—the coins chinked as they rolled unheeded on the marble floor ! How he lashed the protesting Scribes with his scorn, as he said :

“ It is written : *My house is a house of prayer for all peoples !* Ye have made it a den of thieves ! ”

He went towards the Court of Israel. The Zealots were everywhere ! There was not a single Roman ! . . . Before the Gate of Nicanor, paralytics lay on their pallets—and I thought of how I had once lain on mine. The deaf craned forward, the blind fumbled in space, the dumb uttered uncouth sounds of entreaty. He did not even pause to lay hands on them, but made a sign over them all, and the blind saw, the deaf heard, the dumb sang, the paralytics danced ! My feet seemed to dance with them ! Oh, then, even the youthful Levites acknowledged his Kingdom, and shouted :

“ Hosanna ! Hosanna ! Son of David ! ”

And when the priests were angered at their acclamations, Jesus said to them :

“ Have ye never read : *Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, Thou hast perfected praise !* ”

And tremulous with ecstasy, he cried :

“ I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes ! ”

He pressed onward. He passed through the second court. But would he dare enter into the third, the forbidden court ? The Guards barred the way, and asked :

“ What sign do you show us, seeing that you do such things ? ”

“ Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up ! ”

He would destroy the Temple ! He would re-build it !

Then, standing at the top of the fifteen steps whence the blessing descended on Israel, he said :

“ Now is the hour come ! . . . The hour when the Son of Man shall be glorified ! ”

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The hour had come ! The Kingdom was about to appear ! My whole body thrilled with expectancy of the miracle ! . . . But why was the voice of Jesus so heavy with anguish ?

“ Now is my soul troubled . . . Father, Father, glorify Thy Name ! ”

Why was his soul troubled ? Had he lost hope of establishing the Kingdom except through his death ?

I waited. Suddenly, the silence was shattered by tumult and uproar ! Were the gates of the Temple being closed ? Was thunder crashing in the cloudless sky ? Had an angel appeared in the blue, or was it the Voice from on high that had spoken ?

“ The Voice from on high has made answer ! ” whispered some, but Jesus cried :

“ Now is the Judgment of the World ! Now Satan, the Prince of this world, shall be cast out ! ”

Now ! Where had all the armies hidden ? They would be destroyed at a single word ! Why did the sun still shine ? Another sun would soon outshine it for ever !

I waited ! All waited ! The whole world waited !

But no trumpet-blast awoke the dead ! No sign appeared from Heaven. None of the scattered tribes flocked together from North, South, East and West ! No Gentile nations brought offerings to God ! No sword was changed

to a ploughshare, no spear to a reaping-hook ! The Kingdom of Heaven did not descend on earth !

Had the hour not come ? . . . Must there be sacrifice and death ? . . . The voice of Jesus said :

“ When the Son of Man shall be lifted up on high, he will draw all men to him ! . . . ”

When the Son of Man shall be lifted up on high ! . . . When the Son of Man shall be sacrificed ? The Cross ? Must there be a Cross ?

But many no longer understood.

“ Who is this Son of Man ? ” they cried. “ How shall he be lifted up on high ? ”

Ah, with what infinite sorrow the Voice replied :

“ Yet a little while is the light with you ! While ye have light, believe in the light that ye may be the Children of Light ! ”

I sought once more to look at it, this Light, as though I were looking at it for the last time. All eyes were turned towards it. It still aureoled his head, his words still echoed in the air . . . but, as had befallen at Nazareth, on the brink of the ravine ; on the Mount, the night of the miracle of loaves and fishes ; at *Succoth* and *Chanukah* after the stonings—Jesus was no longer there. He had vanished !

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The people were utterly dumbfounded ! A silence that was more than silence had fallen on them. They were bereft of speech—they *could* not speak, all were stricken dumb. The entire multitude was dumb, as if in the presence of a miracle more miraculous than any had hoped to see !

Heads were raised, every face lifted to Heaven, sun-dazzled eyes blinked, and now speech rushed back.

“ Where is he ?—Has he been borne away by

angels?—Will he reappear on the pinnacle of the Temple?—To proclaim peace on earth?—Or is he up there?—On the right hand of God?—To judge the quick and the dead?”

“No,” said other voices, “he has passed beneath the golden vine!—he is in the House of God—he is looking on all those things upon which we are forbidden to look—he alone may look on them—he is burning the offering of perfumes on the golden altar—he has entered into the Holy of Holies—to expiate the sins of the world—like the High Priest at *Kippur*! Is he not both King and High Priest?—like Simon Maccabæus, the Deliverer—he is more than a High Priest—more than a King—he is the Messiah!”

But still other voices cried :

“Is he the Messiah?—What miracle has he worked?—Lashed the cattle—overturned the tables?—Does he desire that there shall be no more sacrifices?—What of our gold in the Temple?—Will he scatter that, also, to the four winds?—He is mad—he is possessed by a devil!—What if the Romans return?—What if the priests deliver him up?—He was afraid, your Messiah was afraid!—afraid of the Sanhedrin, afraid of the Romans—he has fled, as he fled at *Succoth* and *Chanukah*! As ever, he is afraid—afraid of the stones!”

.

Now, in spite of myself, I was impelled forward by the crowd, jostled, kicked and elbowed. In the Court of the Nazirs, in the Court of the Lepers, beneath colonnades, porticoes, and gateways, I repeated stupidly :

“The Kingdom has not come! . . .”

The walls resounded with cries of praise, and shrieks of condemnation, and in the midst of the babel, the voice of Judas hissed :

“ He has fled to the house of Lazarus ! Yes, to Bethany ! I was told by Peter, James, and John—ever the same three ! . . . He has saved himself, *the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep ! Ah, his sheep know him, and he knows his sheep . . . and there are other sheep ! Them also will he bring so that he shall have one fold and one shepherd ! . . .* Only, the wolf may come and find his flock ! As for the Shepherd, he has saved himself ! He prefers a castle ! . . . ”

But as Judas and I went down to Bethany, he grew thoughtful :

“ Why does he continue to flee ? There must be a text—there is always a text.”

And Judas sought for his text !

CHAPTER XXII

THE NEXT MORNING, we climbed the road from Bethany toward the mount of the Temple. Jesus had not fled ! Each day, he went forth to teach ! Could he be waiting for the Romans ? Was he determined to be reckoned amongst the transgressors ?

Pilgrims had pitched their tents on the hills and in the valleys. Others drove flocks of white lambs garlanded with green leaves along the highways. They were going up to Jerusalem for the coming Passover, and they sang as they went towards the city.

But Judas . . . had he found the text he sought ? He no longer sneered, but spoke almost tenderly of Jesus.

“ Do you remember when he told us the parable of the Pharisee and the publican ? The Pharisee stood before the altar, and boasted in his prayer of fasting twice a week, and paying tithes of all he possessed. But the publican stood afar off in the Court of the Goyim, and dared not even lift his eyes to Heaven. He beat his breast, and the whole of his prayer was : ‘ Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner ! ’ Yet he went to his house more forgiven than the other ! . . . And do you remember the parable of the labourers in the vineyard ? Those who went last received as much in wages as those who had gone first ! God leans towards injustice to reward all who repent ! Have you ever heard of anything more beautiful ? ”

What had taken place since yesterday ? Had the new text made a new man of Judas ?

.

By the bridge over the Kedron, we again encountered my uncle and aunt with my three younger cousins. Ah, Uncle Simeon no longer said : "Jesus may be the Messiah !" He tugged at his beard, and asked :

"Where will he lead us with his words ? Is God *the* Father, and Jesus *the* Son ? Has God only one son ? Are not all men His sons ? Is Jesus the only Son who *knoweth* God ? Is Jesus the only way to God ? Did not Moses know Him, did not Adam, and Noah ? . . . We shall be charged with the desire to make God our own—— Yet shall we not, in the same breath, be told : '*There is no other salvation than through Jesus*' ? "

But my Aunt Sephora pulled at his sleeve, and repeated :

"Where is Baruch ? Where is Reuben ? "

"With the Zealots, as you know," replied Naaman, "in the Tower of Siloam ! "

"Baruch in the Tower of Siloam with the Zealots ! Is Reuben, too, in a tower with the Zealots ! . . . Let us seek them ! Let us go home ! Let us go back to our sandal-making ! "

"But if the Kingdom comes, we shall not be here to see it," objected Isaac.

"If the Kingdom comes it will be everywhere ! "

It was not till then that I became aware of my aunt's agony. She was trembling from head to foot as though she could sense some terror that was drawing near.

They made me go with them to the tower. Reuben and Baruch were keeping watch on the battlements.

"Come down ! " cried their mother.

"We cannot—we must stay ! " cried Baruch.

"Until the end ! " cried Reuben.

"You, the Essene, are resolved to fight ? "

"If the Romans return, I will not lift a finger against them, but I will die for him ! "

“Do you hear them, Simeon? They talk of death! Am I their father, or are you their father? Command them to . . .”

“Reuben! Baruch!” cried my uncle. “I command you to . . .”

But he stopped short, shook his head, and tugged at his beard.

“Has not Jesus brought about that which he foretold? ‘The son shall be divided against his father, the daughter against the mother. The whole house shall be divided against itself. . . .’ But in my house it shall not come to pass! I will utter no command! Never shall I cause a Jewish son to disobey!”

My aunt was sobbing now; it was to me she turned.

“How could you have left us? How could you have left Dina who waits for you? Make them come back! Come back with them! *We must leave this place!*”

But what did my uncle, my aunt, and my cousins mean to me now? My unease was not for them. . . . I left them there, the two poor old people, at the foot of the tower, with their three younger sons who, too, perhaps, were ready to desert them, already forgotten by their two elder sons who scanned the horizon, high up on the battlements!

.

When I entered the Court of the Goyim, men with lowered heads were coming out, one behind the other. Every one of them grasped a stone. Amongst them, were Salphaad and Thebni. . . . All at once, I felt my heart stand still:

“Have they stoned him already?”

Wherever I looked, I saw shouting, gesticulating groups. I caught sight of Judas, who hastened up to me, panting for breath:

“Do you know what he has just done? . . . Some of the Pharisees . . . they had brought a woman to the Beautiful Gate. Her yellow veil had been snatched off, and a rope was knotted round her waist. She strained back, but they dragged her by the wrists with all their strength. ‘Master,’ they said, ‘this woman was taken in adultery. Moses commands us to stone her to death. What sayest thou?’ Jesus averted his gaze from the woman—he would not humble her further!—and made pretence to write with his finger in the dust! . . . At last, he raised his head, and what do you think he said to them: ‘He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her!’ . . . Without sin! . . .”

For years, as you know, the custom of stoning women for adultery had lapsed. Our Elders required so many proofs that, in consequence, punishment was impossible! But his answer was none the less lovely. Yet had not Judas heard Jesus make many answers that were just as exquisite? . . . To-day, his eyes beneath their red brows were full of tears. The eyes of Judas were full of tears! . . . Why?

We were standing by Solomon’s Portico. Judas leant on the parapet, and tried to fix his gaze on the Mount of Olives, and I, instead of rejoining the Master, stayed where I was. I found myself counting the columns. . . .

All sorts of people came, went, stopped, went, and came again. There were veiled women, and Sadducees draped in stuffs from Babylon. I would not let myself think, and saw, through a kind of dream, tailors, scribes, peasants and merchants; as in a dream, I heard voices that muttered various comments.

Some said that the small fry still followed the Master, as well as many men of note, such as Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea and certain of the Elders, all of whom hoped that he would triumph. But they were cautious!

They had no desire to compromise themselves ! And he distrusted them ! He could read the hearts of men !

Others said that, only that morning, he had cursed a fig-tree because it bore no fruit. Had he expected to find figs at Passover ? Why not at *Chanukah* !

Still others were full of bewilderment. The Rabbi had spoken of a journey. Men would seek for him, but where he went, none might follow. Did he mean to kill himself ? Or did he intend to go amongst the Goyim to bring back the lost tribes of Israel ? Or did he mean to teach the Goyim themselves ? Teach them what ? He had learnt nothing ! And why should he run after the Goyim when the Greeks ran after him ? Yes, certain Greeks had greeted him with great reverence but a short while ago ! What had he to do with the Greeks ?

But many grew angry, and I listened to them intently :

“ They let him speak !—No one stops him !—Will the Elders accept him as the Messiah ?—The Elders ? They have despatched eight Guards to seize him—but the Guards are fearful of the people—his hour has not come—say, rather, that he has taken possession of the Temple—his Zealots hold the gates—and the Tower of Siloam—and the Antonia Tower—can you not see their black hoods ? ”

Now they were talking about Rome :

“ What of the Romans from Herod’s palace ?—Why have they not come forward ?—Are they waiting for reinforcements ?—Has Pilate been warned ?—The Sanhedrin must have sent him word—why does he still tarry in Cesaræa ?—It is customary for him to come up to Jerusalem before the Festival—be patient ! There are yet four more days—he will know what use to make of them—this Jesus must be seized before the Festival !—No, after—no, before—what matter whether it is before or after if only he is made captive ! ”

I listened, more rigid than the marble columns by which I upheld myself. . . . And Judas ? He stared at the Mount of Olives, and seemed unaware of what was said. Yet he reiterated :

“ If only he is made captive ! ”

“ What ! What are you saying ? ” I cried.

He turned, looked straight into my eyes, and said again :

“ If only he is made captive ! . . . The High Priests themselves must deliver him to the Romans ! If they do not . . . if they do not . . . ! A Jew must deliver him, deliver him to the High Priests ! . . . ”

“ A Jew ? ”

“ Last night, he left the Temple ; but not to escape. He will leave the Temple every night ! . . . But what if he were delivered up . . . one night . . . not in the Temple ! ”

“ Who will betray him ? ”

“ Yes . . . who will betray him ? ”

He leant on the parapet again, but now he looked down into the valley, the depths below.

“ Let him be taken ! . . . Let no man ever betray him ! ” he entreated.

And he bent over the ledge. . . . Was he about to fall ? Did he mean to dash himself headlong ? . . . I had to drag him back by his cloak. . . . Ah, if only I had not stopped him !

.

As we returned that night to sleep on the Mount of Olives, the Master, with his apostles and certain of his disciples, entered that cave by the wayside—the cave where you can now see that shrine I pointed out to you in the hollow of the rock at the end of the passage.

It was the very place for teaching, meditation, and prayer—and, if occasion arose, concealment ! Twice,

after the two stonings, Jesus had hidden there. . . . I did not go in. I kept watch outside. No one had told me to keep watch . . . yet my fears for him put me on my guard ! It was no longer fear of something far distant, it was fear of what was close at hand ! Fear took possession of me . . . I ceased to exist. . . . My fear had become alive—it shuddered, hoped, dreaded, kept vigil, and whispered to me :

“ Watch over him ! . . . Let them not betray him ! . . . Let them not seize him ! ”

But who would betray him ? . . . Could it be one of the Twelve ? Had he not said : “ One of you is a devil ! ” ? Was Thomas, the doubter, that devil ? Could he doubt afresh after the raising up of Lazarus ? Even if he doubted, would he betray him ? . . . If it were not Thomas, would it be Judas ? . . . But I had heard Judas entreat that no man should betray him !

And as the apostles came out of the cave, one by one, I looked at Judas, looked at Thomas.

“ Will it be Thomas ? Will it be Judas ? ” I thought.

CHAPTER XXIII

ON THE FOLLOWING DAY, as soon as the sun rose, Abdias, Bathuel and all their associates crowded into every corner of the Temple. They rolled their eyes, lowered their voices, and muttered, so that the people might hear :

“ Can the Messiah come from Nazareth ? ”

“ Must he not be a descendant of David ? ”

“ What says your Jesus : that a father does not call his son *Master*, and that David would not call the Messiah *Master* if the Messiah were his son ! ”

“ Because your Jesus is not the Son of David, he pretends the Messiah is not ! ”

“ He himself admits that he is not the Son of David—that he is not the Messiah ! ”

“ You yourselves have made him King ! But has he shown you the Kingdom ? ”

“ Where is this Jerusalem built of sapphires that was to have descended from Heaven ?—Where are the dead who were to have ascended living from Sheol¹ ?—Where are those armies of Goyim that were to have been destroyed at a word ?—Where are the lost tribes of Israel that were to have returned ? ”

Subsequently, the obese gentlemen in full regalia made their appearance on the dais before the great curtain at the top of the fifteen steps. You could see Hanan—or Annas, if you prefer—the ex-High Priest who had bought his diadem outright from Quinius ; and next to Annas, Caiaphas, his son-in-law, the present High Priest, who paid Pilate annually for his. You could

¹ Hell.

admire the five sons of Annas—all budding High Priests—not counting the Captain of the Temple, his nephew, and the Grand Treasurer, his cousin. It was quite a family affair ! The entire House of Boëthos ! The entire House of Phabi ! They had brought out the fine twined linen, the ephods of blue and purple and scarlet, the breastplates, and the entire paraphernalia of tin-ware !

There they stood, the friends of Rome, who trembled with fear before Rome ! Would they make the friends of Jesus tremble with fear ?

“ By what authority do you teach as you teach ? By what authority do you do as you do ? ” demanded Caiaphas.

From down below, but yet as though he were raised above them all, Jesus replied :

“ Answer me first one thing : Was the baptism of John from Heaven or men ? Answer this, and I will answer you.”

Caiaphas hesitated. If he said : “ The baptism of John was from Heaven,” the Master would ask : “ Why are you not baptised ? ” and if he said : “ The baptism of John was from men,” the followers of Jesus might fall upon him. The wary Caiaphas, therefore, made no reply, and Jesus said quietly :

“ You have not answered me. Neither will I answer you ! ”

How the people laughed and applauded ! Was the display of tin-ware going to withdraw ? Not yet ! Dathan, a fat Sadducee in a violet robe, wished to draw Jesus on the subject of the resurrection. Oh, you can be sure he was not actuated by any interest in philosophy, but as none dared arrest the Master for fear of the Zealots and the people, the only thing to be done was to provoke their anger against him, was it not ?

"A man married a woman," said the Sadducee with the protuberant purple belly. "And shortly after, he died. According to the Law of Moses, his brother took his place. He also died, as did the third, fourth and fifth, down to the seventh, each brother having married the woman in turn. She, seven times widowed, had had, in all, seven husbands. In the next world, who shall be her husband of the seven?"

"If only he denies the next world!" murmured Judas, "all those who now believe in him will not stir a finger in his defence!"

But Jesus did not deny it, he retorted:

"Men in this world take wives, and women husbands. But in the next world, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in Heaven!"

I breathed freely again. The crowd was delirious with delight! There was another burst of applause.

.

Now it was Thebni, the Pharisee, who advanced softly:

"Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly. Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Cæsar, or no?"

Ah, what danger lurked in that question! If he answered *No*, he would anger the Romans; if he answered *Yes*, what would be the effect on the people who were waiting for him to exterminate the Romans with the breath of his lips?

"Bring me a denarius!" said Jesus.

When it was brought to him, he scrutinised it. What was he going to say?

"Whose image and superscription has it?"

"Cæsar's," they made answer.

You know what he said : “ Render unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar’s, and unto God the things which be God’s ! . . . ”

This time, the Pharisees exulted !

“ He says we must pay tribute to Cæsar ! ”

“ Then how shall we pay tribute to the Temple ? ”

“ He the Messiah, who must drive forth Cæsar, tells us to pay Cæsar ! Does he liken Cæsar to God ? ”

“ If we pay Cæsar, who will pay God ? ” . . .

There were eddies and ripples in the crowd. Jesus seemed suddenly isolated.

“ They are going to seize him ! ” muttered Judas.

And the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and even the Zealots themselves shouted yet louder :

“ You heard what your liberator said ! You only desire to serve God, but you shall serve Cæsar !—You have set up a King against Cæsar, and this same King will be the friend of Cæsar !—Whom will Cæsar crucify ? You, or the King, his friend ?—Cæsar will crucify you all, and your Messiah will furnish the wood for your crosses ! ”

But now Jesus turned to answer them. He was ringed round with light—no longer the soft sheen of the moon, but the fierce glow of the sun ! He held his anger in check, he scarcely raised his voice, yet all the people were perforce silent ! In utter silence, they listened !

He spoke of a man who planted a vineyard, set a hedge about it, dug a wall, and built a tower. Then he let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. When the season approached, he sent to the husbandmen a servant that he might receive from them the fruits of the vineyard. But they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. He sent another servant, and another, then many others, but the husbandmen struck them and stoned them. Yet he still had one

messenger left to send : his son, his well-beloved. Him he sent last, for he thought : " They will reverence my son." But the husbandmen said amongst themselves : " This is the heir ; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours !" And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard ! . . .

Now the voice of Jesus swelled forth :

" What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do ? He will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard to others ! "

" What does he mean ? " muttered the crowd. " Do you understand what he means ? "

" Do you not understand ? " cried the Pharisees. " The master is God ! The servants are the prophets ! The son is himself ! And the vineyard is the inheritance of Israel."

" He wishes God to destroy you ! To break his covenant with your forefathers, and give your inheritance to others ! "

" Yes, to give the land of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to others ! . . ."

" The land that flows with milk and honey ! . . ."

" To give the Torah and its blessing to others ! "

" Wheresoever he went, he proclaimed : ' Both earth and sky shall belong to the Gentiles ! ' . . ."

" And for you there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth ! . . ."

But now there thundered from him anew that denunciation he had already hurled against his enemies, terrible to them, but still more terrible for himself : the denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees who make clean the outside of the cup, but within are full of extortion and excess ; who pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have omitted judgment, mercy and faith ; who bind heavy burdens too grievous to be borne, but will not

move them with one of their fingers ; who shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against men, but neither go in themselves ; who build the tombs of the prophets and garnish the sepulchres, and say : “ If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets,” and upon whom shall fall all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias whom they slew between the Temple and the altar !

It was no longer the sun that shone round Jesus : it was lightning that blazed about him now, flash after flash ! Everything receded from me : the Master, the brandished fists, the distorted faces, the shouts and yells. The columns, porticoes, and the golden Temple grew infinitely remote. But my fear, my agony of dread, screamed to me :

“ Compel him to be silent ! Lead him forth ! Save him ! ”

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To give vent to such a diatribe in an obscure village, near a placid lake, was a very different matter from thundering it forth in Jerusalem, in the very House of God ! The people had gathered there from every part of the country—from Judæa, Haran, Gaulonitis, and Galilee ! They had come up to the Temple, driving their flocks before them, and singing Psalms—all those to whom the Pharisees were Masters, Saints, the Law, and the Prophets !

Suppose such terrible words were to be repeated to-day. Can you not picture another Temple in which they would resound ?

All the seats are filled by the great ones of the earth. The representatives of every nation crowd into the semi-circle of space by the receivers, through which they

get translations of all the different languages of all the different speeches. The French delegate has proved that one army will be sufficient to make peace ; the German delegate requires at least ten, provided they are German armies. The Soviet delegate has declared that a gun is only a gun when it is used against the proletariat ; the English delegate that a shell only kills when it kills on land, it never kills when it kills at sea. America has claimed : " No one will ever disarm the nations except by selling them arms." Italy : " We only prepare for war because of its beauty—we would never really make war, even if it were necessary." Last comes Japan : " War is only war when you call it war ; you can do exactly the same thing if you call it peace."

Then *he* rises : the Delegate of God ! He stands close to the microphone, and from the Pacific to the Atlantic, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the Indian Ocean to the Arctic Sea ; and from the Arctic to the Antarctic, the whole world listens-in breathlessly to what ensues :

" Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, ye hypocrites who do lip-service to disarmament, but within are full of bombs and torpedoes ! Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, who stick to the letter of pacts, conventions, and scraps of paper, and who scoff at the good faith, justice and honour of the spirit. Woe unto you who bind the burden of war on the people, but who will not shoulder rifles yourselves ! Woe unto you who will not enter into the Kingdom of Peace, and who close its doors against mankind ! Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, who set up statues to Briand, lay wreaths on the grave of President Wilson, and who say : ' If we had lived in the days of other wars, we should not have allowed any bloodshed ! ' Serpents ! Generation of vipers ! How shall you escape damnation ? God will send you apostles of peace : you will imprison them, persecute them, and

exterminate them ! Therefore, upon you shall fall all the innocent blood spilt on the earth, from the blood of Abel whom Cain murdered, unto the blood of the ten millions killed in the last war, and the ten millions that will be killed in the next war, and the ten thousand millions that will be killed in the wars to come—the wars that you are all preparing ! ”

If God's Delegate were to utter such words to-day to the Pharisees of Geneva, what would all the Jews of the world reply ? . . . Oh, I know your Zangwill asserted that, if ever the Galilean came back on earth, the Jews would be the only ones who would refuse to crucify him. And, indeed, they would not present him with a cross ! To-day a cross is merely pinned on the lapel, or hung round a beautiful neck. But the French Jews would do nothing to prevent him from being shot by the French, the German Jews by the Germans, the Italian Jews by the Italians ; the English Jews would watch him being hanged, the American Jews would look on while he was being electrocuted, *et cætera, et cætera*, all round the world, not forgetting on the return journey the Republic of Andorra, or Vatican City !

Is it merely to stand aside, O Jews, is it for no other end, that you have existed from century to century, set apart from all other men, by the Torah, by prayer, diet, and martyrdom ? Surely, if that were so, you would have adopted no nationality, would have belonged to no army, would have killed no man in war, nor hunted any animal to death. Surely, God would not have made you strangers everywhere, yet citizens everywhere, for no other reason than that your rabbis might join in with the priests and clergy, and give their benediction to the practice of universal slaughter. Have you no greater mission towards those countries that have gathered you in, no nobler mark of your gratitude ?

One nation shouts to the other : “ You disarm first ! ” and the other shouts back : “ After you ! ” But I, for my part, I exhort you : Jews, wherever you are, take the lead ! The others will follow you ! Urge disarmament wherever you are, as patriots in each country, as patriots of the world ! Mankind will not secure peace unless it is ready to die for it ! Be foremost in this, O Jews ! for you will be working for the Kingdom ! In saving your countries, you will save the world !

But if you intend merely to do what the others are doing, become at least what they have become ! If you are not true Jews any longer, do not be Jews at all ! Betray Israel, but be honest enough to betray it up to the hilt ! Be merged in the nations ! Cease to be even as much as a name that still has a semblance of life ! Do not be so unconscionably long in dying ; die, and let me die with you !

CHAPTER XXIV

The speaker had risen, and was pacing to and fro on the hill-top. Presently, he continued :

That night, as we slipped out of the Temple, we knew that the promised hour had not yet come. All were silent. But I sought for speech, and marvelled aloud at the strength of the walls.

“Do you see these buildings?” said Jesus. “There shall not be left one stone upon another!”

And he mourned for Jerusalem that kills the prophets, and stones them that have been sent by God. How often would he have gathered her children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings! . . . But Jerusalem had not heeded, and behold she would be left desolate!

At the top of the Mount, Peter, who could not understand any more than the others why the Kingdom delayed, asked: “When shall it be? What shall the sign be when all these things shall be fulfilled?”

The Master stopped where I am standing now. He gazed, as I am gazing, at the Temple. What despair suddenly rose to his lips—what dreadful words they uttered!

“Woe unto them that are with child, and woe unto them that shall give suck in those days! Those shall be the days of vengeance that all things which are written may be fulfilled!”

He spoke of great distress in the land, and wrath upon the people. They would fall by the sword, and be led away captive into all the nations. Jerusalem should be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. When men should see the city

surrounded by armies, and the Abomination standing where it ought not to be, he who should be on his house-top must not go into the house to take up his possessions, and he who should be in the field must not turn back again to take up his garment ! Those in the city must leave it, those in Judæa must flee to the mountains !

Everything grew dark ! Everything was crumbling away. But hope was re-kindled.

“ You shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come ! . . . Verily I say unto you that this generation shall not pass till all these things be done ! Heaven and earth shall pass away—but my words shall not pass away ! ”

I thought—or, rather, I tried to think :

“ Have not Herod and Pilate already set up the Abomination of Desolation where it ought not to be set up ? Will there be another, will there be other armies, other sieges, other Romans ? Will not even the Master’s death bring about the Kingdom ? Must Jerusalem also die ? ”

But I scarcely listened. Massacres and exiles were remote events ! Long before then, Jesus would die : would I let him die ?

.

That night, I did not sleep beneath the tent. I kept watch, and walked round and round the encampment. The moon was nearly full, as it is to-night. Judas, too, kept vigil. Why ? We met, close to this very spot, and sat, he and I, just where we are sitting. You might be he. As for me, I was the same then as I am now. . . . After a pause, he said :

“ Do you know that Nicodemus has been to see him ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Do you suppose he advised him not to go back to

the Temple? Do you think he means to help Jesus escape?"

"If only he can!"

"But . . . if he saves Jesus, who will save the world?"

He rose abruptly.

"Judas!" I cried.

Where was he going? I saw him stride along the summit in the moonlight. His back was turned to Jerusalem.

Why did he trouble about the world? . . . Compared to Jesus, what was the world?

.

On the morrow—the Master did not go up to the Temple. At last, he was hiding! . . . But suppose, as Judas had said, it were only so that he should be taken outside the Temple! . . .

All that day, he taught in the cave. Judas had gone up to the city to learn what was being said. I watched for his return at the end of the long passage. I went in and out, called Thomas, and asked:

"What does the Master teach?"

Thomas shuddered.

"He says that men shall lay hands on us, persecute us, imprison us, and bring us before their Sanhedrins! He says that, to bear witness of him, we shall stand up before kings and rulers! Brother shall betray brother to death, and the father his son! Children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death! And for his name's sake, we shall be hated by all men!"

I, too, shuddered.

"Will that be the end?" I asked.

I wanted to test Thomas, to discover whether he had doubted anew since the raising of Lazarus, and if doubt could lead him as far as betrayal.

“ No, it will not be the end,” he answered in terror. “ The days will come when we shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and shall not see it. False prophets will arise, and say to us : ‘ Lo, here he is, or there,’ but we must not believe them ! And if they shall show great signs and wonders in his name to deceive even the elect, if they say : ‘ I am he, the hour is at hand,’ we must not follow them. For he shall have gone forth like a prince to a distant country to receive his Kingdom, and when he returns, he will slay all those before him who had not wished him to reign over them ! ”

“ Slay them ? ”

“ Yes—slay them ! ”

Thomas was livid.

“ And will that be the end ? ”

“ No, not yet. There will be wars and revolts ! Nation shall rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom ! There will be plagues and famines, and the earth will quake ! These will be but beginnings of sorrow ! ”

“ Yet did he not say yesterday that before we had passed through all the cities of Israel in our flight, the Son of Man would come ? ”

“ You did not hear him aright. To-day, he says that first of all the Gospel must be preached to all the peoples.”

“ But the end ? When will it come ? ”

He was silent. At length, he said slowly :

“ No man knows when it will come : not even the angels in Heaven, not even the Son ! No one knows—no one save only our Father ! ”

“ Then does the Kingdom recede from us hour by hour ? First, it was to have come during the life-time of the Master, then, three days after his death. Then, after the death of Jerusalem, then, after his long-awaited

return. And now, God knows when the Kingdom will come ! . . . If it is thus, what will you do, Thomas ? ”

How I hung on his answer ! His face had suddenly changed :

“ I shall stand fast ! He who stands fast shall be saved ! Even though I doubted, I would stand fast ! For he will uphold us—he has promised—against ourselves, against others. We need take no thought of how to speak in our own defence, for he will give us speech, and wisdom that none can refute. He will send us, from the Father, a Spirit of Truth, a Holy Ghost ! He will be with us, and we shall be with him ! ”

And as I listened to him, I thought :

“ This is not the man who will betray him ! ”

Thomas went back to the others. I could hear the voice of Jesus as he taught in the cave. But I did not go in. I was waiting for Judas.

.

He came into sight. Hidden in the shadowy mouth of the cave, I watched him draw slowly near. He saw me, and shuddered. He stood beside me, and stared into the gathering shadows. The day went down on him. Not pausing for me to question him, he said :

“ Annas, Caiaphas, the Elders . . . They told me that . . . they are mad with anger because the Guards did not seize him in the Temple. . . . But the Guards made reply : ‘ Never have we heard a man speak as this man hath spoken ! ’ The Scribes flung at them : ‘ Are ye also deceived like those *ammé-haaretz*¹ who are ignorant of the Torah ? ’ . . . But Nicodemus intervened : ‘ Does our Torah judge any man before it hears him and knows what he does ? ’ Annas insulted him : ‘ Do you also come out of Galilee ? ’ . . . Some asked : ‘ How shall

¹ Dullards.

we rid ourselves of him ? ' and others answered : ' Let it be before the Feast ! Not on the Feast Day, lest the people revolt ! ' Still others said : ' If only we could rid ourselves of him by cunning without the knowledge of the multitude ! ' ”

And in a low voice, Judas added :

“ Even when we were at Ephraim, they had commanded : ‘ If any man know where he is, let him show it, so that we may take him ! ’ . . . ”

Suddenly, he half-shouted :

“ He must be betrayed ! . . . It must be ! . . . For the salvation of the world. . . . There is one who must betray him for thirty shekels : it is written ! ” . . .

It was written ! There was a text !

His shoulders heaved. He slipped into a huddled heap against the rock. His head was sunk between his knees. All I could see of him was a yellow robe that shook convulsively at my feet, a formless shape that shuddered and quivered in a passion of grief and tears !

From within the cave, Jesus continued to teach. And his voice became as the voice of a mountain, a planet, a universe.

“ The sun shall be darkened in those days. The moon shall not give forth her light. And the stars of Heaven shall fall. And all the peoples of the earth shall see the Son of Man with his angels coming in the clouds with power and glory. And he shall sit on the throne of glory ! ”

I remembered the hermit of Mount Arbela. That other cave ! . . . The same prophecies ! But what were the sun, the moon, the falling stars, the Throne of Glory and the Reign of Glory to me ? What was the Kingdom to me ? For I thought :

“Judas has not yet betrayed him. But he is resolved to betray him ! ”

And the Voice went on. Clothed in majesty, it came from the Throne of Glory. It separated the righteous from the unrighteous, as a shepherd separates his sheep from the goats. It set the sheep on his right hand, the goats on his left. It said to the righteous : “ I was an-hungered, and ye gave me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me in : naked, and ye clothed me : sick, and ye visited me : imprisoned, and ye came unto me. For, inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Come, ye blessed of my Father. Inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world ! ” And to those who would sit on his left hand, the Voice said : “ Depart from me, ye cursed ! Into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels ! ”

But what did the Last Trump, the Resurrection, Gehenna or Eden, the Kingdom of the Righteous or the Flames of the Unrighteous matter to me ? Over and over again, I repeated it to myself :

“ Can you stop Judas from betraying him ? ”

And the Voice from the other world forewarned us :

“ Now have I spoken all things. Take heed to your selves that this day comes not upon you unawares ! For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. You know not the day nor the hour. Watch, therefore, and pray ! ”

But what did the hour or the day matter to me ? What did it even matter to me if Jesus were mistaken, if he dreamed, if he were neither a Judge, nor a Messiah, nor a God ? It was Jesus, *the man*, whom I loved ! It was over Jesus, *the man*, that I watched . . . and I thought :

“ How can I save him ? ”

CHAPTER XXV

ALL NIGHT LONG, we remained in the cave. Endlessly, I repeated to myself :

“ How can I save him ? ”

Next morning . . . it was their *Holy Thursday*. . . . Judas asked the Master :

“ Where do you desire us to prepare the Passover ? ”

And Jesus replied . . .

“ *Did you say Thursday ?* ”

In spite of myself, I interrupted him. He was silent for a moment. Then :

I see ! You want to know ! . . .

“ *Yes, it may only be a detail, but . . .* ”

It is an important detail !

“ *Did Passover, that year, begin on Thursday evening or Friday evening ? Was the Last Supper a Passover Supper, or not ? A . . .* ”

A *Seder*¹ Night, as you say in Hebrew, if you speak Hebrew. . . .

“ *The Synoptic Gospels seem to indicate that . . .* ”

What you really ought to say is : whoever arranged the Synoptic Gospels . . .

“ *Have it your own way ! They seem to indicate that it was a Seder Night ! On the other hand, if the Last Supper was a Seder, there are a good many discrepancies ! For instance, would the Priests, Scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees have sat in council immediately after Seder when the Festival had already begun ? Would they have asked Pilate to desecrate a high Feast Day by pronouncing sentence of death ? Would Joseph of Arimathea*

¹ The eve of Passover.

have bought spices, and given the dead burial on a Day of Festival? . . .”

And would Jesus have celebrated a Passover in Jerusalem without a Paschal lamb? You know perfectly well that it was the custom for every man to bring a lamb to sacrifice before the altar of the Temple on the afternoon of the *Seder*! Well, then, re-read your Synoptic Gospels: neither the Master nor the apostles went back to the Temple after *Holy Tuesday*. When could they have killed the lamb?

“Perhaps Jesus shrank from killing an innocent creature. A bloodless cult, which then had no parallel in the world, had existed for centuries in the synagogue next to the Temple: a cult based on prayer, wisdom and truth! Jesus must have preferred it to the other!”

Possibly! But at that time, a Jewish Passover in Jerusalem without a lamb would have been no more Passover to Jesus than Christmas Day without a Christmas tree would be Christmas Day to you Parisian Jews!

“But . . .”

But what does the Gospel of John say—the gentle John who, in all the passages which have not been too much doctored, gives the most faithful of facts? *“Before the Feast of Passover . . . during the Supper.”* Is that clear enough? The Last Supper was *not* a *Seder*! Besides, I was there! I saw what I saw! The Passover was only partaken of in Jerusalem. You had to book your tables for weeks ahead. Thousands of pilgrims reserved them. That was the reason why, on Thursday morning, Judas said to the Master: “Where do you desire us to prepare the Passover?”

Oh, he spoke so innocently! But I watched him. Jesus risked his life now if he went up to the city! Was Judas laying a trap for the morrow?

“I will shadow him,” I said to myself. “If he goes

out, I will go with him ! If he speaks to anyone, I will be close at hand ! And if he says anything equivocal . . . ”

But Jesus made answer to Judas : “ John and James shall go.”

And he directed them : “ Go into the city, and you will meet a man bearing a pitcher of water. Follow him. Into whichever house he shall go, enter. The master of the house will show you a large room furnished and prepared. There make ready the *Seder*.”

“ Those two again ! ” fumed Judas. “ Am I not the one to choose a house, order a meal ? ”

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When James and John had left the cave, Judas followed them. And I followed Judas. I was so distraught that I took no heed of the way we went. We skirted the ravine. We skirted the walls. We passed through a gate . . . the man with the pitcher of water was waiting. All had been planned in advance. As soon as he saw us, he strode on ahead. Oh, it was no short cut that he took ! He led us through street after street. Were there others whom he wished to throw off the scent ?

We came to the Upper City. There are many cemeteries there to-day. Judas said to me, apparently at random :

“ We are quite close to the palace of Caiaphas ! . . . ”

We were standing on the actual site of the Cœnaculum, in the vicinity of the Guggenheim Foundation. But this mosque and these churches had not yet come into existence. Neither had these pointed arches, nor that iron gate, nor the green canopy between the two columns—nor to the left, at the extreme end, the spurious Tomb of David draped with a black cloth !

We could hear regular tapping sounds as if a muffled hammer were striking on an anvil covered with

cotton-wool, though we could not tell from what direction they came. . . .

We had set up the horseshoe-shaped table, arranged the couches, brought forth the *mazzoth*,¹ the dish of figs and shelled almonds, the vinegar and the herbs—we had laid out the cups and the candlesticks. Nothing was wanting but the lamb that was to be sacrificed on the morrow.

Judas left us, saying :

“ I will go and buy the lamb. . . . ”

As before, I followed him. He looked at me.

“ Is he going to Caiaphas ? ” I wondered.

But it was not to the house of Caiaphas that he led me—it was to an enclosure where lambs were gambolling. He bargained for one, drew the money from his scrip, and counted the coins one by one ! . . . But down below, the muffled sounds of knocking were redoubled.

“ It comes from the direction of Siloam,” I heard people saying, and suddenly others ran up, shouting :

“ The Romans ! They are undermining the tower ! ”

I, too, began to shout :

“ Baruch ! Reuben ! ”

And I, too, broke into a run. I left Judas. I forgot everything. I dashed wildly through the city. Everyone was running. . . . I passed gardens, arches, squares, colonnades. . . .

“ Reuben ! Baruch ! ”

What did Reuben or Baruch matter to me ? To me who did not trouble any longer about this world or the next, angels or devils, the Last Judgment—or the Kingdom of God ! Yet I repeated to myself over and over again :

“ Reuben ! Baruch ! ”

¹ = *matzos*, unleavened bread ; *mazzoth* is the pronunciation that a Palestinian Jew might be expected to have used.

I sought for a gate that would take me out of the city. It did not even occur to me to ask my way.

At length, I found myself outside the walls. . . . I was once more in the valley. The sounds of hammering continued below. . . . To the left, ramparts rose above me. . . . I rounded a hill that looked like the bald head of a man. Was this Golgotha ? . . . The valley deepened. Was this the spot of which Aunt Sephora had told me—was this Tophet where, in former days, children had been passed through fire to Moloch ? Not far away, in the depths, I could see a large pool, and towers . . . towers !

“ The Tower of Siloam ! The Tower of Siloam ! ”
I repeated.

I looked at the mountain opposite me that was honey-combed with caves.

“ And Jesus ? ” I thought. “ Are you deserting him ? Jesus who is down in the cave. ” . . .

But I continued to run. At the cross-roads, near a fountain, I caught sight of the tower. The knocking went on and on . . . the tower shook, trembled, swayed. . . . Again I shouted :

“ Reuben ! Baruch ! ”

And I ran on, my arms outflung, as if, from where I was, I could prevent it from falling ! There was a sudden silence, followed by screams, and a crash as though the entire mountain had hurled itself headlong into the valley. . . . And again, the screams arose !

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As I drew near, the people of Siloam were rushing with piercing shrieks from the holes in the rocks where they lived. Opposite, on the hill, the Romans in helmets and breastplates were scaling the breach. A cloud of dust floated towards the pool. In the centre of the cloud, the iron-clad battering-ram had stopped swinging . . .

and on the ground below, figures were stooping over the ruins amidst screams and cries, above which rose an even wilder wail of anguish :

“ Reuben ! . . . Baruch ! . . . Baruch ! . . . Reuben ! . . . ”

It was my Aunt Sephora, as she sought for her sons beneath the fallen masonry. My uncle supported her in silence. Had they remained at the foot of the tower all night long, or had they returned, by chance, during the night ? . . . I dared not approach them. I felt instinctively that if they saw me, it would only add to their distress.

I joined in the search. When they went to the right, I went to the left ; when they went to the left, I went to the right. Mutilated bodies were being dragged from the débris. Corpses were being borne away on litters. My aunt would bend over them, then once more bend over the stones. . . . Had my cousins left the tower before the arrival of the Romans ? Had they escaped in the direction of the city ? . . . She continued her search—I continued mine . . . did I, then, love Baruch and Reuben so dearly ?

All at once, I caught sight of a shadow that stretched out before me over the ruins. My shadow. It was only my shadow ! What made my thoughts suddenly revert to Jesus ?

“ Judas has betrayed you ! If Judas has betrayed you, it is I who have betrayed you—I who have crucified you ! ”

I left my aunt and uncle, the living and the dead. I ran past the monolith, past the Tomb of Zechariah, and the Tomb of Absalom . . . I crossed the Kedron once more . . . I was so distraught that I climbed again to the top of the mountain. . . . Yes, I sought for Jesus beneath the tents of the encampment ! Yet I knew I had left him

in the cave below ! I turned to begin the descent. . . .
And I saw——

Ah, the Temple was no longer a hill of gold on a field of snow ! There was scarlet on the snow—it was dabbled with pools of scarlet ! . . . And between the scarlet pools, bodies were strewn !

.

When I reached the cave, I found Judas keeping watch.

“ The Master—is he here ? ” I stammered.

“ Yes.”

I felt my knees give way ; I sank down. I drew a deep breath ; it was as if I had never yet known what it was to breathe. . . .

“ I could not bring the lamb,” Judas was saying. “ All were rushing to take shelter in the Temple. . . . I could not understand what was happening . . . as I went in, countless Zealots entered with me ! . . . The Zealots were everywhere—under the porticoes, before the Treasury, by the Beautiful Gate . . . suddenly . . . they were Zealots no longer . . . they were Samaritans, auxiliaries of the cohort—disguised as Zealots ! . . . They flashed their knives . . . they flung the bodies of the Galileans at the foot of the altar . . . their blood was mingled with the blood of the sacrifices ! . . . I escaped, I know not how. . . . Massacres were going on in the Court of the Women, the Court of Israel, the Court of the Goyim. . . . Pilate has arrived in the city . . . the legionaries . . . all is lost ! ”

“ But the Master—what will he do ? ”

“ He is resolved to go up to the city to-night.”

“ Go up to the city ? ”

“ Yes, to the house where the supper is prepared. . . .”

“ But the *Seder* is not until to-morrow ! ”

"Perhaps it is another Passover he wishes to celebrate," said Judas slowly. "Another sacrifice."

"Another . . . ?"

"Yes," he made answer, yet more slowly.

. . . Judas was going to betray him ! . . . During the supper that evening, he would betray him. . . . An inner voice cried to me :

"Warn the Master now ! . . . Make haste to warn him ! . . ."

I slipped into the cave, and groped my way, bruising my knuckles against the rocks, to the end of the passage . . . the cave was full of shadowy shapes, but I could see him clearly. He stood erect, a white figure in the darkness, beneath that cleft in the rock—do you remember it? The daylight streamed through, and irradiated him. . . . Daylight ? Perhaps it was a different light. . . .

"Master ! . . ." I said to him.

He looked at me.

"Master ! . . . Judas . . ."

I stopped. He looked at me again, and again I said :

"Judas will . . ."

I stopped afresh. He was not looking at me any longer . . . it was elsewhere that he looked. . . . Almost as though he were intoning a psalm, he said in a singing voice :

"He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me ! . . ."

He knew ! . . . He knew those whom he had chosen . . . he desired Judas to betray him . . . he had only chosen Judas so that Judas might betray him !

CHAPTER XXVI

WHEN THEY WENT out into the night, I followed them. When they entered the house, I entered after them. When they reclined round the table, I served them. None bade me go back. None showed surprise at my presence. Had Jesus made me invisible? To-day I am said to be the Witness—the Witness of the prophecies that were fulfilled! . . . Did he, even then, desire me to be the Witness? . . .

Jesus began to speak :

“ With a great desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. I will not eat any more thereof until it be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God ! I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God shall come ! ”

“ Until the Kingdom of God shall come ! ” I thought. “ Will he not be here to-morrow for the *Seder* ? Will he not keep the *Seder* to-morrow, nor ever again in this world ? Who will ever keep it in the Kingdom ? ”

I took the bowl of figs and shelled almonds, the vinegar and the bitter herbs from the table—all that we had prepared. I brought the platter, and they ate. But as they ate, James and John asked afresh :

“ Who will be greatest in the Kingdom ? ”

Then Jesus rose. He laid aside his cloak, knotted a cloth round his loins, poured water into a basin, and began to wash the feet of his apostles. When he had done, he dried them with a cloth. Peter would not suffer him to do so . . . but the Master said :

“ Ye are clean . . . but not all ! ”

I looked at Judas. Jesus was washing his feet !

He put on his cloak, reclined again before the table, and taught them.

He said that they called him Master and Lord, and that they said well, for so he was. But if he, their Lord and Master, had served them, they ought to do for one another that which he had done for them. He who desired to be the greatest of all amongst them must serve all the others. For the Son of Man had not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life for the redemption of many ! . . .

“ Yet verily I say unto you,” he ended, “ that one of you shall betray me ! ”

The apostles were terror-stricken. I was filled with an agony of dread.

They gazed at one another. John lay on the same couch as Jesus, and rested on his breast. Peter motioned to him :

“ Of whom does he speak ? ”

John leaned closer to Jesus, and asked :

“ Who is it, Lord ? ”

James was angry. Philip refused to understand. Andrew did not understand. Judas lowered his eyes. One after the other, they asked :

“ Is it I, Lord ? ”

“ It is one of you, one of the Twelve who is now eating with me. . . . Now I tell you before it come, that when it has come to pass ye may believe I am he. For the Scriptures must be fulfilled. *He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me ! . . .*” And again he intoned the words.

He dipped the bread in the platter ! He gave the bread to Judas. . . . When Judas swallowed it, I *saw* the Devil enter into him ! . . . And the Master said :

“ The Son of Man must go, as it is written of him. But woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is

betrayed ! Good were it for that man if he had never been born ! ”

None of the others dreamed that it was Judas ! Yet they had seen that it was to Judas he had given the sop !

Again, they ate together. Then the Master spoke to Judas himself, saying :

“ What thou hast to do, do quickly ! ”

What had Judas to do ? . . . He arose ! . . . Would the others let him go ? Did they believe the Master was sending him out to give money to the poor, or to buy the Paschal lamb for the morrow ? Would I let him go ? . . . He moved towards the door ! He went forth !

“ Now is the Son of Man glorified ! ” said Jesus.

Ought not the Son of Man to have been glorified before, when he was in the Temple ? He had not been glorified ! Was he glorified now because Judas had gone forth ? Would Judas be accursed because the Son of Man was glorified ?

“ The Son of Man is glorified, and soon God shall be glorified in him ! . . . ” said Jesus.

Soon ! . . . They had let Judas go ! . . . I had let him go ! . . . And soon . . . he was going to the house of Caiaphas . . . he was going to betray him ! . . . Why was I not following him ?

A voice within me cried :

“ Hasten forth ! Hasten after him ! Strangle him while he is on his way ! . . . Dash him into the depths below ! ”

I tried desperately to obey—I tried to run ! But I made no movement. I did not hurry frantically in pursuit ! . . . Some power held me back ! . . . Was it that power that had said to me : “ Arise ! Take up thy bed, and walk ! ” ? Now it said : “ Thou shalt not go forth ! Thou shalt not hasten ! Stay ! ” And I stayed. I felt that my feet had become rooted to the stones. My legs were two blocks of wood. My flesh hardened into wood.

I was paralysed where I stood ! . . . I strove to cry out, to tell them. . . . I could not utter a sound. . . . My words stuck in my throat ! . . . In my skull, behind my brow, I felt that my brain had suddenly ceased to work ! . . . I tried to think :

“ They will come ! They will take him ! They will nail him to the cross ! ”

But I could not think, any more than the sap that runs through a tree can think ! . . . A Voice said :

“ *Take, eat . . . this is my body. . . .* ”

I could not think, any more than the fibre of a tree can think . . .

“ *My body given for you. . . .* ”

The man stood erect on the mountain, like a dark tree rooted to a rock. His arms were outspread like leafless boughs. His wide-open eyes, fixed in a stare, were two hollows in the bark of his brow : his mouth, above the moss of his beard, was a dark cleft from whence his words proceeded :

Given for them ? . . . What was he giving them ? Bread ? . . . Was he breaking the bread because they would break his body ? . . . What did he want of them ? Did he desire them to share his body ? . . . How could they eat his body ? . . . How could the bread be his body ? . . .

His voice became another Voice :

“ *. . . This is my blood . . .* ”

Now he spoke in his own voice again :

Are they drinking blood ? . . . How can they drink blood ? . . . Who said : “ Thou shalt not drink blood . . . ” ? Even in thought, thou shalt not drink blood ! . . .

The second Voice :

“ *. . . the blood of the New Communion . . .* ”

His own voice :

Yes, blood sprinkled the people, sprinkled the altar ! . . . the Old Communion : Blood ! . . . The New

Communion : Blood ! . . . But the Synagogue has had its fill of blood. . . .

“ . . . *the blood shed for you in remission of sins . . .* ”

But he does not eat. He does not drink ! . . . Is he the lamb whose body is eaten, whose blood is drunk ? . . . Why must there always be a victim ? . . . Does blood wash away sin ? Is repentance not enough ? . . . Will he who refuses to drink the blood not be numbered with the elect ? . . . Must there be blood in order to worship God in spirit and truth ? . . . Must there be blood between God and man, man and God ? The blood of the Son of God ? . . . Blood for the kingdoms of men ? Blood for the Kingdom of God ? Must there always be blood ? Why can I not understand ? . . . They are drinking. . . . How can wine be blood ? . . .

Now the voice was filled with wonder :

They are singing the *Hallel* ! . . . Just as the *Hallel* is sung after the Old Passover, so now they are singing it after the New ! . . .

. . . Are you singing when Jesus is so soon to die ? . . .

Just as it is the custom to talk of the going forth from Egypt after the *Hallel* has been sung, so now they are talking together of his going forth from the world ! . . . Just as it is the custom after the *Seder* to talk of salvation through God, so now they are talking to Jesus of their salvation through him !

“ *I am going to the Father . . . a little while, and ye shall not see me . . . a little while, and ye shall see me. . . . In my Father's house are many mansions. . . . I go to prepare a place for you . . . then I will come again . . . and whither I go, ye know, and ye know the way . . .—How should we know the way, Lord ?— . . . I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. . . .* ”

Now the voice choked :

Why can I not understand ? . . . Do they not wish Israel to understand ? . . .

“ Show us the Father ! . . . Who has seen me has seen the Father ! ”

Why have I become incapable of thought ? Do they wish men to stop thinking in order that they may understand ? . . . Have done with singing ! . . . Lead him forth ! . . . Judas is on his way ! . . . Let me go ! . . . Let me go, I say ! I must save him ! . . . Why will they not let me go ? Do they wish Israel to stand still for ever ? . . .

“ I came forth from the Father, and am come in the world . . . I have conquered the world . . . now I return to God. . . . ”

Let me save him. . . . Can none of you hear me ? . . . Can none of you see me ? . . . Why have they made me invisible ? Do they wish Israel to disappear ?

Suddenly his voice grew triumphant !

He rises . . . his apostles rise ! . . . Judas has not returned ! . . .

Jesus is saved. He goes forth. His apostles go forth ! . . . Shall I be able to follow them ? . . . Yes, my limbs have relaxed ! My feet are no longer rooted to the stones ! . . . How bright the moon shines ! . . . The moon will betray him . . . the valley seems endless ! . . .

“ I will smite the shepherd . . . the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. . . . ”

Now they are skirting the mountain ! . . . the sepulchres . . . the sepulchres !

“ Thou, Peter, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice ! . . . ”

Why do they not hide amongst the sepulchres ? . . . He must not go back to the cave ! . . . Judas knows ! . . . He will come ! . . . He will betray him ! . . . No, I will lie in wait for Judas behind a sepulchre. . . . I will strangle him ! . . .

You cannot wait for him . . . you are the Witness ! You must follow ! . . .

Do not enter the cave ! . . . Do not enter the cave ! . . .

And they entered into the cave ! . . .

.

He fell silent . . . was he coming out of a dream ? . . . He looked at me . . . realised my presence . . . I stammered . . .

“ And then ? ”

And then ? You know what happened then . . . Jesus said to them :

“ Sit ye here while I go and pray yonder.”

Was he going to escape ? . . . Ah, if only he had wished to escape ! . . . But no—he took Peter, James, and John with him. . . . Why ? . . . He climbed with them up to the olive-trees. . . . He stopped at the spot I pointed out to you. He was heavy-hearted and filled with despair. . . .

“ My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death,” he said to them. “ Tarry here, and watch with me.”

Had he set them to keep vigil, to warn him when Judas returned ? . . .

He climbed a little higher. He fell on his face, and prayed. . . . What words did he utter ? I heard them all, but I have forgotten. . . .

He went down to the three. What were they doing ? Were they keeping watch ? . . . No ! . . . Who would save him ? . . . They were asleep ! Even as they had slept on Mount Tabor, even as they slept everywhere !

“ Art thou sleeping, Peter ? What, could you not have kept watch with me for one hour ? Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation ! ”

What temptation ? The temptation to flee ? Ah, if only he had been tempted to flee again, as he had fled so many times before ? But had he really fled ? No, he had only made a pretence of flight till the hour should come from which he knew he would not turn. . . .

And I ? If only I had been able to flee ! If only I had

been able to stop Judas, if only I had been able to kill him ! . . . But I was once more rooted to the earth—an olive-tree among the olive-trees ! If, before the creation of the world, God had willed that Judas should come thither in a moment's space, could his approach have been hindered by an olive-tree rooted in the ground ? . . .

The Master was on his knees again. Something crimson trickled on his brow. . . . Ah, those crimson beads ! Were they beads of sweat ? Could sweat run crimson ? Was it blood ? A bloody sweat ? How deep must be the anguish that caused him to sweat blood.

“ Father ! Father ! ”

He entreated ! He besought ! Was he going to ask something of God ?

“ Father ! Father ! If Thou be willing . . . ”

Ah, let him beseech God ! Let him implore God ! . . .

“ Remove this cup from me. . . . ”

Now at last, he was afraid ! . . . Now at last, he no longer desired to die. . . . Joy welled in me, an ecstasy of joy ! . . . He hoped that God would not require his death ! . . . He had offered his life to God, now he was asking God to restore it to him ! . . . He trembled, he, Jesus, who was so close to God. . . . He trembled like a man ! . . . He wept and entreated ! . . . Was God going to refuse ? Was God going to refuse Jesus to whom prayer had given all, gained all ? . . . Would God, who had refused the sacrifice of Isaac, refuse the sacrifice of Jesus ?

He waited for God's reply ! . . . I waited for God's reply !

Why did he go down to the three a second time ? . . . They still slept. . . . He called them. They opened their eyes. Would they understand ? Would they rise ? Would they lead him away ?

No, he climbed up for the second time, alone . . . he prayed and waited. I waited.

“ Answer him, O God ! Hear him ! Save him ! . . . ”

There was dead silence . . . the moon vanished . . . everything grew black . . . it was the hour, and the power of darkness.

He was still praying . . . would God deny him ? . . . But he besought God no longer :

“ Not as I will, but as Thou wilt ! . . . ”

God had refused ? How could God have refused ? . . .

.

And now the hordes were coming. . . . I could see them on high ! . . . The lanterns. The torches . . . the swords . . . the staves ! . . . The Jews and the Romans ! The tribune . . . the cohort . . . the kiss of Judas ! . . .

“ Whom seek you ? . . . If you seek me, let these go their way ! ”

The others would go their way ! The others would desert him !

Peter drew his sword, and smote off the ear of Malchus. . . .

“ Put up thy sword ! All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword ! . . . Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels.”

Why did he not summon those angels ?

“ But how, then, shall the Scriptures be fulfilled ? ”

Why must the Scriptures be fulfilled ?

“ Why have you come out as against a thief with swords and staves to take me ? I was daily with you in the Temple, teaching . . . and you took me not ! ”

But now they took him. They chained him. They led him away.

Where were the others ? . . . They had deserted him. . . . They had all fled ! . . . Ah, if only I could have stayed where I was, have known no more, seen no

more ! . . . If only I could have been rooted there to the end of the world . . . but suddenly my feet began to move . . . I began to run ! . . .

Yes, I ran after them, at first. . . . I wanted to follow him, save him. . . . A Roman seized hold of my arm. . . . I left my cloak in his grasp, and fled. . . . I betrayed him like all the rest . . . the man of whom Mark spoke . . . the man who fled naked, and left the linen cloth which had covered him. . . . I was that man ! I betrayed him ! I betrayed him ! . . . I betrayed Jesus !

CHAPTER XXVII

I FLED HITHER AND THITHER. I sought for a tomb where I might bury myself, a tomb from which no miracle could raise me. The valley and the mountain were covered with tombs, but I could not find a single one. . . . I stood on the heights, and could see lights that hurried along the roads and squares. . . . An unseen hand impelled me towards the city.

"Baruch? Reuben?" I thought. "My aunt and uncle—what have become of them?"

But the hand drew me on, and as it urged me forward, I heard a voice that said :

"You are the Witness. You must be there to see."

In spite of myself, I followed the hand, the voice. I crossed the Kedron. I climbed the steps of the winding road.

When I had left the walls behind me, I came to the Temple, and there, huddled against a door—the Double Gate, I remember—was Judas. His unbuckled scrip lay in his lap. His fingers groped in it. I spurned him with my foot.

"Don't kill me—I am waiting for the Gate to be opened! I want to give back the money! . . . It was not for the money I did it!"

His teeth chattered. His fingers told over the coins in his scrip. I could hear them numbering them. I could hear the chink of the shekels.

". . . Money—I loathe money! . . . Yes, I took it when it was needful, for my wife and little one, for my grandfather at home. . . . I left them because of him.

... I left my trade because of him. ... Could I let them die of hunger ? ... But it was not for the money I did it ! ”

“ Oh no, you did it to save the world ! ”

“ That was what I believed ! ... Now I know why I did it ! ... I hated the others : he loved them more than he loved me. ... I loved him ... and I hated him ! ... He was no more the Messiah than I ! I knew long ago that he was not the Messiah ! ... Is this a Messiah who pretends that ‘ not one tittle shall pass from the Law,’ and who goes and profanes the Sabbath ... who says : ‘ Give all you have to the poor,’ yet takes from the poor that he may be anointed with perfume ... who bids us : ‘ Forgive unto seventy-times seven,’ and who forgives with a whip. ... Who cries to his apostles : ‘ Do not cast pearls before Goyim !’ and to the Sidonian woman : ‘ I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of Israel !’ ... who says to the Samaritan woman : ‘ Salvation comes from the Jews !’—yet who consigns all the Jews to wailing and gnashing of teeth ... he has but to call his angels and they will descend ? He will destroy the Temple, and rebuild it in three days ? ... Ah, he can do naught but curse the Elders, insult the Pharisees, and give a miserable display of necromancy—this is all he can achieve ! ... And will he sit on the right hand of God ? Be the deliverer of Israel, the Messiah ? ... Did he desire to be a different kind of Messiah ? A Messiah who suffers and dies ? Then why did he not make it plain ? Can men be saved by being kept in the dark ? Why evade a score of times the death which must bring about salvation ? ... If he were King of another world, why did he enter into Jerusalem as a King of this world, with armed men before and behind him ? ... Was it that he might cry forthwith : ‘ The Messiah has not yet come, but he will return ’ ? What mention is there in the prophecies of a Messiah

who will come twice ? Once will suffice—so long as he *does* come ! . . . But it was not enough for him to be the Messiah ! He must also be God ! A man of flesh and blood and dust—such a one to be God ! God had need of him ! . . . Blasphemer ! Impostor ! If you are God, then prove it ! I—I have plucked out the evil from the midst of Israel : as Moses commanded ! . . . And he thought he would fulfil the prophecies ! He re-read the prophets each morning in his wisdom—and did faithfully all that he had read ! Did Zechariah speak of a *foal, the colt of an ass* ? He made haste to mount upon a foal ! Did Isaiah say : ‘ *He was numbered among the transgressors* ’ ? Instantly he commanded : ‘ Buy swords ! ’ Isaiah has written of the sheep going dumb to the slaughter : soon, before Pilate, he will be dumb like the sheep. . . . I, too, fitted the texts so that they should fit him ! I made him the *Man of Sorrows*—who is Israel ! I made him the Son of Man upon the clouds—who is Israel ! Because it is written, I ate his bread, and betrayed him for thirty shekels ! Because it is written, I will restore the gold ! And because it is written, the priests of the Temple will not pollute the Temple by accepting the gold ! . . . It is a parody ! . . . To follow deliberately what the prophets foretold—is that fulfilling their prophecies ? Ah, if only in the first place we had been ignorant of their words, if only we had not discovered till later that we were fulfilling them—then, perhaps, we would have been the instruments of the Most High ! But can we do God’s work by plagiarising God ? . . . He has not done God’s work ! Neither have I ! . . . He will die for nothing ! He will redeem nothing ! . . . I shall have sold him for nothing ! . . . Sold him . . . Jesus ! . . . I have sold him ! . . . I have sold Jesus . . . sold Jesus ! ”

He had risen. The scrip dangled from his wrist. He collapsed against the wall, sobbing and shuddering,

stammering out the words through the bloody froth on his lips :

“ I loved him . . . I loved him ! . . . I have sold him, and I loved him . . . Jesus, the tenderness of God ! Jesus, the love of the world ! I have sold him ! . . . And if he were the Messiah . . . if, after all, he were the Messiah . . . the Messiah . . . the Messiah ! . . . ”

If, after all, he were the Messiah ! . . . Poor Judas, at what moment did you believe you were speaking the truth ? . . . Did you sell him for nothing ? Did he live for nothing ? . . . Did he die for nothing ? I, too, have weighed up the weaknesses and contradictions, the tenderness and the anger ; his surrender to death, and his flight from death ; all his humility, all his pride ! . . . And above all, those two things mingled in one which my mind will never be able to reconcile : the suffering of the man in the greatness of God.

And yet . . . the prophecies that he fulfilled in his lifetime may have been imitative, but what of those other prophecies, his own, that have been fulfilled after his death ? . . . Was not Jerusalem destroyed, as he had foretold ? Was not Israel led captive into all the peoples ? . . . Did not the Twelve receive the Holy Ghost, as he had promised ? Cowards though they were, did they not brave martyrdom ? Fools though they were, did they not conquer the earth ? . . . Is not his Gospel preached to all the nations ? And, exalted on his cross, did he not draw all men up to him ? . . .

Why he alone ? . . . In the course of my travels, I have seen numbers of Messiahs ! There was Theudas who swore to his four hundred disciples that the waters of the Jordan would divide ! There was Moses of Crete who undertook to walk dry-shod across the Mediterranean

. . . and there was David-el-Roi whom I had to disarm at Mosul ! And Reubeni, on whose behalf I went to Rome with Molkho to propose world-peace to one of the Popes ! And there was that Sabbatai Zevi at Constantinople, who became a Mussulman ! And there was that Jacob Franck at Kamnetz in Podolia who ended up by turning Christian ! . . . Who talks of them now ? Who remembers their names ? . . . But *he* has become a God !

And what has he done, this God ? Carried the truths of Israel over the world. Might not the God of Israel, perhaps, have allowed him to mingle a human error therewith in order that he might win the hearts of men ? That is what I sometimes wonder. . . .

For I do a good deal of thinking while I walk along, as you may imagine. When you have all eternity ahead of you, you have plenty of time for thought ! And as my feet carry me on, my thought moves with them ! . . . It comes and goes, loses itself, seeks for itself, and finds itself again. And again, my thought loses itself in dreams . . . there are days when my imagination works strangely ! . . . As I walk, I wait for the Messiah to come . . . and I must also wait until Jesus returns ! . . . But did he tell me that he would return, as my own eyes saw him, with his imperfections ? Did he not tell me, as he told them, that, on the contrary, he would reappear changed, glorious, transfigured ? . . . If I see him thus, will he not be like another ? . . . What other ? . . . Israel's Prince of Peace ? . . . If that were the same one . . . the one for whom I wait . . . let him return . . . let him return, or let him come !

CHAPTER XXVIII

I HAD LEFT JESUS. Within the walls of the city, I edged my way along till I stood facing the gap that had been left by the fallen tower. I looked at the ruins that lay below ; they were like the stones of a burial-place, now white, now black, as the moon drifted over and under the clouds.

“ Reuben ! Baruch ! ” I called in a low voice.

How could I remember them at such a moment ? They had said they were resolved to stay till the end. The end ! . . . Reuben ! Nathan ! Baruch, Isaac, Naaman ! Had I loved them so dearly ? I had never realised it. . . .

What pictures formed in the air above the ruins.

I saw the shop, the bench, the pallet on which I had lived. . . . I saw the knife shaping the leather, the plane smoothing the wood, the coarse needles . . . heard the tapping of the hammer . . . and glimpsed the exquisite white sandals to be worn on the wedding-day. . . . Dina ! Dina ! . . . Uncle Simeon was waving a palm-branch, and a citron . . . he was lighting the candles, one after the other, in the copper *menorah*. He was telling us stories about Hillel :

“ Yes, children, Hillel, the great Hillel, was my master . . . what verse did you learn at school to-day ? ”

And Aunt Sephora spoke of the Messiah !

Wisdom . . . love . . . God always present : when we arose at morning, and when we lay down at night ; when we ate, and when we worked ; when we mourned, and when we rejoiced ! Was not all this to be found in my own home ? The Kingdom of God—was it not there ? Why had I sought for it elsewhere ?

The cock crowed . . . oh, it was not a song of praise, it was a cry of anguish . . . had Peter already denied him thrice? . . . No, the cock had only crowed for the first time. Did it utter such a distressful note to stop the sun from rising on such a day? . . . How often have I heard the cock crow during the years I have walked through the shadows. What betrayals of men and ideals it has harbingered at the dawn of each new day. That ill-omened cry—will it ever cease?

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And now you are going to ask me a question!

"I had promised to say nothing!"

We have come to that terrible hour—the hour of judgment, the judgment of Jesus—that is also the judgment of Israel! . . . Who is responsible for that death I have been made to expiate for twenty centuries—that death that you yourself, every Jew, can expiate to-morrow? Who is responsible?

"Judas?"

But did not Judas believe that he was obeying the will of Jesus and God. If Judas had not betrayed him, would Jesus have been deified?

"Israel?"

There are some who fasten the guilt on Israel—on the whole of Israel! On all the Jew from those of Pilate's day to those of Hitler's! But in that case, why are not all the Christians, past and present, held guilty of the burning of St. Joan? Were all the Jews who lived in the days of Jesus present that morning beneath the Gab-batha to urge that he should be condemned? And those others, all the Jews born since—have they voted unanimously, during each successive century, in favour of his crucifixion?

"Then were certain Jews responsible? The Jews who judged him?"

On what grounds did they judge him ?

" Because he called himself the Messiah ? "

Where will you find a single sentence in the Torah that condemns a man because he calls himself the Messiah ? Many styled themselves thus, after the death of Jesus : were they condemned ?

" Because he had blasphemed ? "

But, to be found guilty of death, the blasphemer must have pronounced the Holy Name, the three syllables of that Name which must never be pronounced. Never were these uttered by Jesus. . . . But did these supposed judges ever even judge him ? Would they, could they, have judged him ? It was essential for a judgment to be valid to have at least two hearings on at least two days in the Chamber of Hewn Stone. In view of this, what Pharisee, what Scribe, knowing the Torah, the traditional teaching of their race—and surely all of them knew it—after one night's sitting in the house of a High Priest, would suddenly have pronounced sentence at dawn ?

" But possibly the Sadducees, who were in the majority at the house of Caiaphas that night, were amongst the uninitiated who, even though they were priests or High Priests, might not have known the points of the Law. Or perhaps that night they deliberately violated the Law."

Yes, something of that sort might have happened. According to what I hear, it happens in many more places than Jerusalem ! . . . But even though they had violated the Law, could this extraordinary tribunal have taken to itself the right of life and death ? No, my dear sir, as you are perfectly well aware, Rome, in her majesty, had reserved to herself that insignificant little right !

" Then was Pilate . . . ? "

If the Sadducees did not know their Law, Pilate knew his ! The *Lex Cornelia*, which you yourself know ! Jesus,

in the eyes of Pilate, had captured the Temple and the city. He had made himself King. What greater justification did Pilate need? The cross, don't forget, was a Roman invention! Only Rome could have invented such an instrument! And this death by crucifixion—which was never Jewish, and had never been inflicted by a Jew—could only have been given to Jesus by a prætor!

"Then Pilate? Pilate alone . . . ?"

Caiaphas and Pilate! . . .

"Ah, yes . . . Caiaphas! . . ."

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On the slope behind the valley in the garden of the Augustines, I showed you the remains of his palace, you remember—fragmentary columns, fallen capitals. . . . Reconstruct it, if you can: erect the porticoes round two courts, one in front of the other; and at the far end, set up twelve wide steps that ascend from a marble threshold to two bronze doors.

I was in the centre of the forecourt. But was I still I? Imagine that brute beasts had snatched away your mother, wife, children, all whom you held dear, to make human crosses of them on crosses of wood. What would you feel? They had taken Jesus from me. They had taken everything from me! . . .

Before my unsteady eyes, the columns moved, the bronze doors advanced and withdrew! . . . the crowds reeled and swayed! The staves held by the Guards of the Sanhedrin jiggled up and down! . . . Where was Jesus?

Tottering Elders, tripping Sadducees, appeared, preceded by torches . . . behind them, an unruly mob hurled itself forward, only to be beaten back by the staves . . . Jesus! Where was Jesus?

Through a muttered confusion of rumours, a son

denounced him in fury : because of the Master, his father had given all he possessed to the poor ! A husband cursed him : his wife had left him to follow the Galilean !

Above the babel of sound, a voice shouted : “ Who will bear witness against him ? ”

Bathuel ! Abdias ! All their crew ! They were buying witnesses to destroy him !

Another voice shrieked : “ Go to him ! Save him ! ”

Who impelled me forward ? How did I make my way through the throng ? Now I was in the vast court. But Jesus—Jesus ? Were they questioning him behind those receding bronze doors ? . . . A lighted brazier danced before my eyes. Archers of the cohort, members of the Sanhedrin were warming themselves round it, and they, too, seemed to be dancing. . . . And Peter, who so short a while ago had sworn : “ Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death ”—Peter was warming himself amongst them ! He held his hands—that seemed to waver in my sight—above the brazier, his fingers spread out. One of them said to him :

“ You were amongst his followers—we know it. You speak with the accent of the Galileans.”

“ I know not what you say,” he replied.

“ I am the brother of Malchus, he whose ear you smote off ! I saw you. You were there ! You were beside Jesus ! ”

“ I ? I do not know the man ! ” he repeated.

And the cock ? Why did the cock not crow ? . . . And those doors. . . . Ah, if only I could see and hear what was going on behind them. . . .

Illusion ! . . . it was impossible . . . the brazier was burning . . . the archers were laughing. . . . From where I stood, how could I hear what was going on behind those doors ? I did not hear . . . but I *did* hear ! . . . Meaningless sentences . . . words I could not understand

... words I suddenly understood—they died into silence, began afresh :

“ Let an end be made before the Festival . . . ”

“ Two consecutive sittings . . . ”

“ Not in order . . . we cannot . . . ”

“ The Torah . . . tradition . . . ”

“ There are times when the Torah can only be saved by being violated. . . . ”

Close to me, the archers were pledging one another ; was I here, or was I up there ? . . . Some voice within me whispered :

“ You are the Witness ! ”

And again I heard those other voices :

“ He has done nothing . . . the Zealots . . . ”

“ On that count, the Maccabees would be criminals. . . . ”

“ What was it he desired ? The Kingdom of God ! ”

Were Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea the speakers in his defence ?

“ We are not sitting in judgment ! We are not a tribunal ! We are holding an enquiry ! . . . Pilate will judge him. . . . We are preparing his indictment. . . . ”

Were the speakers Annas and Caiaphas who were justifying themselves ?

And now . . . how could I see through the walls ? I saw as if through a mist . . . a wrinkled hand . . . yes, a hand . . . a yellow-sleeved arm that gesticulated :

“ Fresh tributes . . . fresh massacres . . . let us save Israel . . . let us save ourselves. . . . ”

Through a grey mist, an ivory seat loomed into sight . . . further off, I distinguished an elbow, beneath a lighted lamp, against tapestried hangings . . . two intent eyes. . . .

“ The people must reject him ! The priests must curse him ! . . . That is for Pilate ! . . . For Rome ! . . . ”

“ But for ourselves ! . . . ”

“ He must be shown to have made himself the Messiah—to have proclaimed himself King ! . . . ”

“ Now for the people ! . . . ”

“ For the people ? He must have blasphemed ! . . . ”

There was a light before my eyes . . . I could see ! . . . Jesus had entered. From whence ? Yes, it was his voice !

“ Question those who heard me. They know what I have said.”

There followed a dreadful silence.

“ Why smitest thou me ? ”

Someone had struck him ! Who had struck him ?

And the question !

“ Will you answer ? Will you open your mouth ? Have you lost your tongue ? ”

He made no reply . . . I heard soft footsteps . . . the door opened . . . Jesus was there ! Jesus stood at the top of the steps ! Peter said :

“ I *swear* I do not know him ! ”

The cock crowed. Jesus looked at Peter. And Peter rose . . . he wept . . . he went away in tears !

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If only I had not been forced to see what followed ! If only I had had no eyes with which to see . . . the filthy cloth with which they bandaged his face . . . the spittle . . . the blows . . . the yells of :

“ Who struck you ? Guess ! Prophecy, prophet ! ”

And I looked on in silence ! I denied him with my silence !

Dawn was breaking—a grey and mournful dawn. The brazier was dying down. The torches were guttering out . . . the witnesses went in. And I went in with them. This time, I would speak ! I would testify for him !

Now it was not through a mist that I saw—it was illusion no longer. I could see them as plainly as you can see me. There they all were, under the gilded ceiling, between the tapestries, on seats of gold, and couches of ivory—the Scribes, the Priests, the Sacrificers, and the Elders : Caiaphas with his toad-like countenance, Annas with his tigerish face, Doeg with his nose like an eagle's beak, Dathan with the jowl of an ox ; and the Merchants, Treasurers, and Bankers, all the Boëthos, Kantharos and Phabi ! . . . But where were Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea ? Had they hastened to Pilate in order to bribe him ? Would gold save Jesus ?

Abdias, Thebni, Gerson and Salphaad, and the rest urged witnesses forward. Some of them cried :

“ He said he would destroy the Temple ! ”

Others :

“ He did not say so ! ”

I also wanted to cry : “ He did not say so ! ” But the words would not come.

“ He said he was the Messiah ! ” shouted a number of witnesses, and others shouted back :

“ He did not say so ! ”

Again I wanted to join my voice to theirs ; again I could not ! . . . Was he willing me to desert him, just as he had willed Judas to betray him ?

But the Priests, the Sacrificers, the Pharisees, the Merchants, and the Bankers—were they speaking, or was it their thoughts that spoke ? What a witness Jesus made of me ! I did not see only them, as you see me—I saw their thoughts too ! Yes, I could see their thoughts as plainly as I see you !

“ He is stirring up strife between ourselves and Rome ! ”

“ There is much good in Rome—I owe my diadem to Rome ! ”

“ Let us save the people ! ”

“ Let us save ourselves ! ”

These thoughts came tumbling from their brains ! They were like a host of distorted faces that screamed from their twisted mouths :

“ He must be proved guilty of sorcery, sedition, transgression ! ”

“ All must be laid at his door—nothing at ours ! ”

Their thoughts had claws, the claws had tongues, and the tongues shrieked :

“ What would become of the Temple without the Bank ?

“ What would become of the Bank without the Temple ? ”

“ What would become of the Bank and the Temple without the sacrifices ? ”

Caiaphas had risen. He opened his toad-like mouth, and said :

“ I adjure thee by the living God to tell us whether thou art the Messiah, the Son of God ! ”

And as he spoke, his mind grew blotched and livid :

“ Say it ! Say that thou hast made thyself King ! Say it that I may repeat it to Pilate ! Blaspheme ! Utter the Name that must not be pronounced ! Utter it that I may tell the people thou hast blasphemed ! ”

But his mouth repeated :

“ Art thou the Messiah ? Art thou the Son of God ? ”

“ You say so,” Jesus made answer. “ Hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of Power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven ! ”

He had not pronounced the Name ! He had said : “ *Power* ! ” He had not blasphemed !

But Caiaphas rent his cloak, and cried :

“ He has blasphemed ! What further need have we of witnesses ? You have all heard his blasphemy ! ”

And the Priests, the Merchants and the Bankers shouted :

“ He is guilty of death ! ”

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They went forthwith to Pilate's Prætorium. Ah, it was a noble procession ! In spite of the early morning freshness, curious spectators had climbed in all the trees, on all the roofs from the Gate of Sion to the gardens of the Xystus ! Had the show been announced in advance ? . . .

First of all came the cohort, with their plumes, breast-plates, bows, spears, and javelins. Next, the Guards of the Sanhedrin with their staves. Then Jesus, with his arms bound behind him, an iron hoop about his middle . . . the apostles did not figure in the programme ! To make up for them, however, the Phabi were all in evidence, as were all the Boëthos, the Kantharos, not to mention the gentlemen in ephods of purple and azure and the entire panoply of tin-ware !

But these gorgeous personages did not enter the Prætorium ! . . . Pilate had to appear on his terrace in person ! Would they have crossed the threshold of a Goy on such a day ? Unthinkable ! These gentlemen had already purified themselves for the Festival ! They were delivering Jesus up, but they were pure ! They were saving their religion and their country ! Every single one of them was a Judas, without the excuse of Judas ! They were like those who, much later on, were to play Judas in Rouen to the Maid. . . . They recited their little report to Pilate :

“ We found this man exciting the people to revolt ! He has tried to prevent them from paying tribute to Cæsar ! He calls himself the Messiah ! He proclaims himself King ! ”

Why did they mix themselves up in the affair ? Did Rome need their services in order to arrest Jesus ?

Would the Prætor have made any bones about crucifying Jesus uninvited ? Therein was their sin ! It is all one to me whether their proceedings were legal or not, whether they invoked the letter of the Law rightly or wrongly ! They only invoked it for a contemptible reason : so that they might deliver up to Rome a conquered Messiah ! Ah, those good subjects of Cæsar, who wallowed in blood ! Lickspittles, cowards, and flunkys ! At any moment of any year of any century, they would sell God Himself, in order to save their skins, their robes of office and their money ! God who desires to save them, and to save the world !

But to-day, how many Rabbis, Bishops, Judges, and Members of Parliament ; how many Consistories, Chapters, Courts and High Courts would act otherwise ?

So much for them ! But what are we to think of the others, the compilers, as you call them, who have conventionalised the rest of the story ?

“ *Compilers ? Are you not now yourself a critical historian ?* ”

I don't invent—I assert !

“ *Assert what ?* ”

That there are at least two Pilates in your four Gospels ! . . .

“ *Only two ? If you were a historian, how many would there be ?* ”

In the first place, the Pilate who had just massacred hundreds of Galileans during the sacrifice, mingling their blood with the blood of the victims ; the Pilate who, when he was first made Prætor, turned thousands of Jews into the arena, and gave his archers orders to draw on them ! The real Pilate !

A man is brought before him, and he is told : “ This man has stirred up all Judæa and all Galilee ; he has

made himself king against Rome ! ” Pilate questions him : “ Are you the king of the Jews ? ” — “ My Kingdom is not of this world. ” — “ But nevertheless, *you* are a king ? ” — “ You have said it. I am a king. I was born to testify the truth ! ” . . .

What did the truth or the other world matter to Pilate ? This Jesus had made himself King against Rome, the King of another world perhaps, but yet a King. Pilate had heard enough. Had Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea tried to bribe him ? Possibly gold was acceptable to prætors ! But this particular gold would have cost Pilate dearer than his diadem to Caiaphas ! The Emperor had his eye on every part of his empire. What price would Pilate have paid for the liberation of a rebel who had proclaimed himself king ?

Already, the acclamation of the people was equal to a legal election. It was thus that the Cæsars were elected ! And for a man to declare : “ I am King ” — was it not, to this Roman, an admission of sedition and lèse-majesté ?

What was there surprising in the fact that he let his soldiers deck the accused in a scarlet robe, put a reed in his hand for a sceptre, and a wreath of thorns on his head for a crown—let them mock him by crying : “ Hail, King of the Jews ! ” ? He ordered him to be scourged and crucified : nothing could have been more simple. And so that there could be no possible mistake, he himself dictated the sentence which would indicate the reason for his condemnation at the top of the cross : *Jesus, King of the Jews*. The High Priests protested : “ Do not put : *King of the Jews*, but that *He called himself King of the Jews* ! ” But Pilate refused ! “ What I have written, I have written ! ” he replied. He was determined to make an example, to put the *King of the Jews* to death, so that they would know in Rome that he was enforcing the Law. Here is your consistent Pilate !

But the other, the false Pilate ! The butcher who becomes as gentle as a sucking-dove ! This functionary of Rome who forgets his function and forgets Rome ! He is beset by scruples ! He guesses that the High Priests have delivered Jesus up to him because of their jealousy ! He swoons with admiration at his refusal to answer ! His wife has dreamed that the accused is a saint ! He has gone into the matter, and found nothing unlawful in this revolt ! And he, the Roman, the Prætor, is afraid to judge the accused. So he sends him to Herod Antipas who is, apparently by chance, in Jerusalem ! And this *old fox* who offered himself the head of John the Baptist on a charger for his banquet—who dreaded to discover in Jesus a second John whose only thought was to kill him—this old fox is merely desirous now of seeing him perform a tiny miracle ! He, too, finds Jesus blameless and sends him back to Pilate, who, sinking deeper and deeper under his insidious spell, makes use of any and every stratagem to save him !

From what it appears, the Jews had the right to request the liberation of a prisoner every Passover ! Flavius Josephus, however, who omits no single detail in his histories, never even refers to this right ! No matter ! There happens to be a criminal called Barabbas. “ Whom will ye that I release unto you ? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ ? ” Pilate asks the Jews. “ Barabbas ! Barabbas ! ”—“ What shall I do then with Jesus which is called the Christ ? ”—“ Let him be crucified ! ”—“ Shall I crucify your King ? ”

He is trying to soften their hearts—he is so tender-hearted himself ! He leads Jesus out in his scarlet robe and crown of thorns : “ Behold the man ! ”—“ Kill him, kill him ! ”—“ What evil has he done ? ” repeats the innocent Pilate. “ I find no fault in him that deserves death ! Take him and crucify him yourselves ! ” The

crowd yells even louder : " If you release him, you are no friend of Cæsar ! " The Jews give the Prætor a lesson in administration ! And the High Priests vociferate : " We have no other King than Cæsar ! " Whereupon, in despair, the wretched Pilate liberates the man who was taken among the insurgents, and delivers up the Son of God before whom he himself had trembled ! . . .

" *But all that . . .*"

Wait, that's not all ! This extraordinary Roman knew verses 6 and 7 of the twenty-first chapter of Deuteronomy by heart ! *He washes his hands of the blood of the righteous !* . . . It was essential, of course, that Rome should have had no hand in the affair. The new God could not possibly be a rebel condemned to death by Rome ! Rome was to favour him with her exclusive custom ! Rome was to become the Christian Empire ! Crucify Jesus ? Rome must on no account be guilty of the crucifixion ! The populace had forced its hand ! It was such a simple matter to force the hand of Rome—that hand which she washed so scrupulously, and which, moreover, had never been spotted with blood ! . . . And that's why the *shufflers* of the Gospels invented Barabbas !

" *Invented ? You admit the theory of . . .*"

My dear sir, I'm not acquainted with theories. I only deal in certainties ! *O legomenos Barabbas*, he whom they named Barabbas—as you can still read in Mark, in spite of all the alterations ! *He whom they named Barabbas*—was he Barabbas or someone else ? Barabbas or not Barabbas, that is the question, as your Shakespeare says, who may himself be someone else ! Who *was named* Barabbas ? Bar Abba, in Hebrew or Aramaic. . . .

" *What ! You treat the historians as novelists, and you . . .*"

Don't interrupt me, please ! . . . What is the meaning of Bar Abba ? . . .

" *You treat them as novelists, and . . .*"

Keep quiet—you gave me your word not to talk ! . . .

“ *And you borrow their plots . . .* ”

I borrow from no one ! I only say what I know !

“ *Their wildest fictions ! . . .* ”

Fictions ? What is the meaning of Bar Abba ? *The Son of the Father* ! Is that fiction ? Who could be named *the Son of the Father* ? . . .

“ *But there is nothing to prove that . . .* ”

You know as well as I where to find the answer ! In the ancient manuscript of Matthew, the *Codex Bezae*, that appeared in Cesaræa ! In that Codex, *he who was named Bar Abba* is still called Jesus ! *Iesus o legomenos Barabbas*—*Jesus, surnamed the Son of the Father* ! The other Barabbas never existed !

“ *But . . .* ”

But what ? The whole story resembles the Apocrypha as closely as two peas in a pod, as you say in English, if you speak English !

“ *The Apocrypha ?* ”

Only, it was essential, of course, for all Israel to have condemned Jesus. . . .

“ *I agree with you on that point !* ”

. . . For not a single Jew to have raised his voice in his defence, for all the Jews to have elected that a murderer should be released in preference to Jesus, and for all the Jews, without exception, to have cried : “ His blood be on us, and on our children ! ”

.

Fortunately, or, rather, unfortunately, I was there. . . . I saw him standing on the terrace, the King of the Jews, with his reed sceptre, his crown of thorns that the brutes forced down over his eyes with heavy blows of their clenched fists, and his mockery of purple flung over another purple—true purple, this—the purple stains of

his scourging ! . . . He was no longer ringed round with light—neither sunlight, nor moonlight, nor glittering sparks of fire—an opaque black shadow hid him from me now . . . three-fourths of the crowd were shrieking :

“ Crucify him ! ”

There he stood, the Messiah who was to have set them free, and annihilated Rome with the breath of his lips—there he stood, the captive of Rome, mocked and scourged ! And because of him, Rome had massacred the Galileans !

But the minority, the faithful—a few of the faithful still remained—raised a counter-cry of :

“ Release him ! Release him ! Give us back the Son of God ! Give us back the Son of God ! Give us back Jesus ! Jesus Barabbas ! . . . ”

“ Jesus Barabbas ! I never will accept . . . ”

But it was essential that the crime committed by a few Jews and a few Romans should be expiated by all Israel for all the centuries to come. So that there might be everlasting hatred between Jews and Christians, so that no single Christian could ever go to Israel in the name of him who had said : “ Forgive them, for they know not what they do.” They who *knew what they did* desired this vengeance !

Oh, they say that the God of Israel is a God of vengeance. Does He visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation ; and does He bless, unto the thousandth, their good deeds ? But the God of Forgiveness has no memory for good deeds ! He never blesses ! He never forgives ! He will visit His wrath upon all the Jews yet to be born until the end of the world—and even after !

CHAPTER XXIX

The speaker fell silent. We had now come to the end of the ridge, behind that door which leads to the Tombs of the Prophets. . . .

He seated himself with his back to Jerusalem. What ailed him suddenly? Why this silence, this distress, these imperceptible tremors that conveyed themselves to me?

He propped his elbows on his knees, and buried his face in his hands. In a colourless voice, devoid of all expression, he said :

“ Now . . . question me ! ”

Was I to question him, I whom he had so often forbidden to speak? What remained to be said—now? Dare I say it even to myself? . . . The ascent! . . . Calvary! . . . And on the cross! . . . What words could I find to ask him these things which still had their being in his shuddering form? Had they taken place nineteen hundred years back—or only a moment ago?

The moon had vanished under racing black clouds. I gazed at Jerusalem. Through the embrasures of the walls, its minarets, domes, and terraces were merged in the silver-edged shadows, and the city assumed the tortured shapes of the cloud-wrack overhead.

With his face still hidden in his hands, he began to speak :

Question me! . . . Help me! . . . I have not even been able to tell you what they did when they scourged him . . . stripped naked before the eyes of all . . . fastened by both wrists to the hook of the pillar, like a side of beef to the hook of a butcher's shop . . . six men, thick-set and sturdy, sweated and panted as they scourged him . . . followed by six others with thongs of white leather . . . to be replaced by six more with chains of spiked iron

... the skin ravelled from his back that was a welter of black, blue and scarlet . . . his eyes were suffused . . . I cannot tell you . . . then how can I tell you what remains to be told ?

They flung his tunic over his body, lacerating all his wounds . . . they fastened straps to the iron hoop about his middle by which to drag him along . . . they forced him to lie on the ground that they might burden him with the wooden cross, they forced him to rise and carry it. . . .

A little way away, down in the square, two other condemned men were being brought—bandits, it appeared ! All the enemies of Rome were bandits ! . . . I did not look at them, I only wanted to look at him. . . .

Now the ascent began . . . first of all came the cavalry—yes, the cavalry . . . followed by the herald who blew his trumpet at every street-corner, while he who accompanied him cried :

“ Jesus of Nazareth is going to be crucified ! The King of the Jews is going to be crucified ! ”

Next followed those who carried the bolts, nails and hammers . . . then, the length of his straps away, Jesus with his cross . . . then, the man who bore the inscription to set above his cross . . . then, the two other condemned men at whom I did not glance, and behind, the rabble who shrieked :

“ Blasphemer ! . . . Sorcerer ! False Messiah ! ”

From every roof, every terrace, came hoots and yells of derision . . . and the children, of whom he had said : “ Suffer the little children to come unto me ” . . . they came to him, the little children, and flung stones at him ! . . . And he suffered it ! For the redemption of the world ! For the peace of the world !

Look at Jerusalem : those shadows in conflict with shadows ! Church against Mosque, Mosque against

Church ; Church and Mosque against Synagogue ! And in the Synagogue, Aschkenazim against Sephardim ! In the Mosque, Hachemites against Waabites ! In the Church, Roman Catholics against Protestants, Armenians against Copts, Lutherans against Calvinists, and Anglicans against Presbyterians ! And in every continent, in every country, factories for guns, high explosives, and torpedoes—laboratories for poison-gas, disease-germs ! It was for this, then, that he was ascending Calvary, for this world-salvation, for this world-peace !

Again the speaker hid his face. Could he see in the palms of his hands those images of the past which had become the present ? He said :

I went ahead. I looked back that I might see him face to face as he advanced. The mounted soldiers drove me away. Then I hastened through winding alleys to await him further up. I heard the cry of : “ Jesus, the King of the Jews, goes to his crucifixion ! ” grow nearer. I heard the hoots and whistles . . . and again drew close to him. . . .

He stumbled on a stone, and fell for the first time. The soldiers dragged him up by the straps. His arms and legs drooped limply from the iron belt.

He fell a second time, and lay full length in the dust beneath his cross. His crown of thorns rolled on to it . . . they forced him to his feet with well-aimed kicks at his head, his neck, his back. Bent almost double, he continued on his way, his face covered with blood . . . someone, a woman, little more than a child . . . (How like she was to Dina ! . . . But how could Dina be there ?) . . . wiped his face with the corner of her veil. . . .

The third time . . . ah, the third time . . . it was outside the city . . . at the edge of the road which winds

up . . . he was trailing himself towards me, weighed down by the cross . . . and when he was quite near, he sensed my presence. . . . He raised his head a little, his head with the crown they had again forced down over his eyes. . . . He looked at me through the thorns . . . his hair dripped with blood, his beard was matted with blood . . . he said to me :

“ Carry my cross ! ”

And then——

The man's voice suddenly died away! His hands dropped from his eyes, and he fell forward, his head lying limply on the grass. He had fainted. . . . Alone on the mountain, what could I do for him? I laid him on his back, chafed his hands, and listened to his heart-beats. . . . I could no longer distinguish his features—he was no more than a dark shape under the dark sky. . . .

Would he regain consciousness, and comment lightly, as after his first fainting-fit near the Martyrium : “ Pray don't feel perturbed—it's merely one of my brain storms. It will pass—everything passes ” ? . . .

I raised him to a sitting position with his back against the rock . . . no, this time there was no levity in his voice :

I could not ! . . . I could not carry his cross ! . . . Why ? At first, I did not know. . . . I had heard a cry that came from lower down, where the road twisted round . . . and another cry :

“ Reuben ! . . . Baruch ! . . . ”

My Aunt Sephora, on the edge of the crowd, pointed to them, and, in spite of herself, recoiled with horror. Yet simultaneously, she stretched forth to them her arms that trembled with horror.

“ Baruch ! . . . Reuben ! . . . ”

Now I, too, saw them. They had just rounded the bend. . . . Had I not already realised who they were when they were led into the square ? Yes—yes—I had

only hastened ahead because I could not face that realisation !

They were climbing slowly, their naked bodies bent, their backs lacerated with bloody stripes. And both of them carried crosses ! . . . Where had they been captured ? In the tower ? Outside the tower ? Why had they been condemned ? Why they, and not others ? . . . *They* were the bandits, the enemies of Rome ! They carried crosses because of Jesus ! Should I carry his ? Should I carry his, and not theirs ?

The soldiers dragged my Aunt Sephora back. She eluded them, ran to her sons, shrieking and sobbing, and tried to tear their crosses from them. My uncle watched her, but made no movement. Was he praying ? . . . Finally, the executioners flung her aside. Rome was stronger than the poor old woman ! Utterly broken, she followed in an agony of tears. My uncle supported her. I, too, upheld her. . . .

.

So, as you will understand, there are many things in the Gospels that I only know, as you know them, because I have read them, like you. I was no longer his witness alone—I was theirs ! When he refused the wine mingled with myrrh, I did not hear him. . . . When he said to the daughters of Jerusalem : “ Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves,” I was weeping for Aunt Sephora . . . when Simon of Cyrene took his cross, I was helping Baruch and Reuben to carry theirs.

But up there on the crest of the hill ! . . . When they stripped him naked again, tearing off the tunic that had stuck fast to his wounds . . . When with tools that grated they drilled holes in the wood of the cross. To fasten him to it, they extended his arm with all their strength because they had set the holes too wide apart ; they

stretched his legs with all their strength because the holes they had made were too low down. With their knees pressed against his breast, they hammered with all their strength on the flat heads of the three-sided nails, and drove them through his hands and feet with their hammers . . . his bones cracked, a stifled sound rose in his throat . . . and the nails buried themselves in my heart !

But do you think the holes were not holes, the nails not nails, for the two on either side of him ? . . . And a little later, when the three crosses were raised, one after the other, swaying backward and forward until they were set firmly in the ground like three trees of sorrow—do you think the cross on the right or the cross on the left was any more comfortable than the cross in the centre ? The three bodies were wrenched and dislocated in the same agony. Muscles contracted, faces grew black, then green, then livid.

What were they doing to thee, my Jesus ? What were they doing to thy feet that had sped to bring the Gospel ? What were they doing to thy hands that had been spread out in blessing ? What were they doing to thy lips from which love had come forth ?—those lips which said even now : “ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do ! ”

Oh, I know ! Reuben and Baruch uttered no sublime words ! They were only poor men ! They did not expect to rise on the third day—they did not expect to sit on the right hand of God, and judge the quick and the dead ! They could only hope for the humblest seat in the Kingdom the Master had promised ! They were dying, even as he was dying, for the redemption of the world that they awaited from him.

Baruch the Zealot rebelled.

"Art thou not the Messiah?" he cried. "Save thyself! Save us!"

Reuben the Essene submitted. He only murmured:

"Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy Kingdom!"

But he, the Son of God, how long did he endure on his cross? Six hours, six long hours! . . . But the sons of Israel on either side of him have been nailed to their crosses in his name for nearly twenty centuries—nor will they be taken down to-morrow!

So it comes about that the longer I travel over the world, the nearer I am to understanding why, on that morning—without yet fully understanding—I was unable to carry his cross.

.

And yet—I suffered for him, as I suffered for the others. . . . The Roman soldiers would not let anyone approach. Below, Mary, his poor mother, stood with the other women and John. From afar, she gazed at her son on the cross. My Aunt Sephora was there, too, on the opposite side, with my uncle and cousins and Dina. And she gazed at her two sons on their two crosses.

A little later, there came another centurion easier in discipline. He it was who said afterwards: "This was the Son of God!" Mary tottered through the thick of the crowd to the foot of the cross. The wife of Chuza and another woman supported her. Mary of Magdala was shrieking—she tore her face with her nails. . . . John, too, drew near.

"Woman, behold thy son. . . ." Jesus said to his mother, and to John:

"Behold thy mother. . . ."

Now we brought Aunt Sephora through the throng.

But, for her, there were two crosses ! She had two sons ! She could not even remain stationary in her anguish—she had to move to and fro, to and fro from one to the other.

A band of pilgrims passed by. They were going up to the Temple to slay the lamb when the trumpet sounded. They climbed the hill to see Jesus. They jeered at him. . . . Some of the soldiers were dividing his garments, and casting lots for his tunic . . . when he was parched, they filled a sponge with hyssop, and pushed it against his lips on the point of a spear. Abdias, Bathuel, all his enemies hurled insults at him :

“ Thou that destroyed the Temple, and buildest it in three days, show us now if thou canst come down from thy cross ! . . . Thou who putttest thy trust in God, let God deliver thee now if He loves thee ! And we shall see ! We shall believe ! . . . ”

Was he himself shaken by doubt at that moment ? Was he still hoping that his sacrifice, like that of Isaac, would be refused—that one last miracle would save him ? He groaned :

“ My God ! My God ! Why hast Thou forsaken me ? ”

Would not his blood wash away sin, redeem men ? . . . Was the dying Messiah the Messiah no longer ? . . . What agony—greater than all he had yet endured ! How he must have suffered if he had doubted—he who was Faith !

But the whole world mourned with him. I felt the earth tremble. I saw rocks crumble into dust. And the sun, though it was broad daylight, was overcast . . . For him, for Jesus . . . but for the other two . . . perhaps it mourned for them too. . . .

Now on the Mount of the Temple, the trumpet sounded, the lamb was being slain. . . . He bowed his head, and said :

“Father, into Thy hands, I commend my spirit !”
and uttered a loud cry . . . for him, all was over.

But not for the other two.

Joseph of Arimathea came. The centurion, with a single thrust of his lance, pierced the heart of Jesus . . . his mother had fainted, and saw no more.

But the other two ! . . . Why did they linger ? They might at least have had the decency to die before the Festival ! The soldiers broke their bones with iron maces, battered them to death on their crosses ! . . . And Aunt Sephora saw it all !

And after this, Joseph of Arimathea took Jesus gently down from his cross . . . tenderly, so tenderly, he carried his body away, and laid it in a sepulchre where no man had been laid before, at the end of a garden . . . he wound it in fine linen, and sprinkled a hundred pounds of aromatic spices !

But the other two ! The soldiers threw their broken bones into two baskets . . . they went through the valley where, in former days, children had been passed through fire to Moloch. They flung the bones into a charnel-pit ! And Aunt Sephora saw it all ! . . .

And I, through century after century—I see it still.

CHAPTER XXX

THAT SAME NIGHT—it was the eve of Sabbath, and the first night of Passover—Uncle Simeon celebrated the *Seder* at the house where he was staying with Aunt Sephora and my three remaining cousins. Dina was there, too, and so was I.

He broke the *mazzoth*, passed round the dish of figs and almonds, and the bitter herbs ; he divided up the lamb without breaking the bones. He read us the story of Israel's bondage, the ten plagues, and the crossing of the Red Sea dry-shod. He emptied the four cups, and prayed that the Messiah might come soon and in our own time. He sang the *Hallel* ! Had not the children of Israel come forth out of Egypt ? Would not the day come when all men would be saved ? Yes, my uncle had just seen the mutilated bodies of his two sons cast into the pit—and yet he sang !

After the songs, we held forth at great length, as usual, on the miracle of the Deliverance. No one spoke of the dead. All that my uncle said was :

“ Those who die on the eve of a Sabbath will share in the Kingdom of God ! ”

“ Then will *he*, too, share in the Kingdom ? ” I asked.

“ Perhaps ! . . . ” he made answer.

The next day—which was the Sabbath, and the first day of Passover—we all went up to the Temple in our festive garments : a Jew does not weep on the Sabbath !

On the way back, Dina showed me her veil.

“ Do you see ? . . . Do you not see ? ” she asked.

I stared uncomprehendingly.

"Your uncle and aunt and cousins cannot see either. But I thought that you who followed him would see," she said.

"What ought I to see?"

"His face on the veil! Do you not recognise it? . . . This is the veil with which I wiped his face!"

"Ah! So it was you?"

"Yes. . . . And this morning, when I was about to put it on, I saw his face on it! . . . I thought of him from the day you left me. And so I came. Now I want to leave my people, and follow Martha, the two Marys, all the women he loved!"

And she gazed at the veil. She could see the face of Jesus on it, the *true picture*—Vera Ikon, you know. Yes, it was Dina whom they called Veronica! . . . And I, too, looked at the veil. But I saw nothing.

.

When she went away, I meant to stay with the others. But it was impossible. My legs would not let me stop. I went towards the Tower of Hippicus. I wanted to sit down; I seated myself—but I was forced to rise. I went as far as the Gate of the Valley. Again I seated myself, again I was compelled to my feet. I walked to the Pool of Siloam, but even then I could not stop.

I walked on and on. I walked round the walls, and when I had come back to my starting-point, I walked round them a second time. My legs, that not so long ago had been paralysed, now would not let me stand still. As soon as I attempted to stop, I was aware of a pricking sensation in my toes that spread to my heels, ankles, calves, knees and thighs. It was just as if millions of needles were digging their sharp points into my flesh from within, into my very bones! My heels had to shake

themselves in an effort to rid themselves of the pricking needles, my knees had to bend, my legs had to begin stepping out ! And when my legs moved, I was beset by another form of discomfort, for it was just as if there were leaden weights within me that pressed my thighs down to my knees, my knees down to my ankles. I felt that each of my legs was larger than my entire body, and I dragged them along like two ponderous sacks that did not belong to me. . . . I had not got into my stride yet, you understand !

“ Why are you walking like this ? What’s the matter with you ? Are you mad ? ” I said to myself.

It was impossible to stand still or move without experiencing first one painful sensation and then the other. As soon as I began to walk, the leaden weights shrieked : “ Stop ! ” and as soon as I stopped, the million needles screamed : “ Walk ! ” But the needles screamed louder, and so once more I began to walk. . . .

Suddenly, in the middle of the night, at the spot where the broken column now stands—by the Austrian Hospital, you know—I remembered !

“ You shall walk until I come again ! ”

Yes, he had whispered those words to me in a thread of voice when I had refused to carry his cross ! I had forgotten them. . . . Had I ever heard them ? . . . But I heard them now ! Close behind me, I heard his voice murmur :

“ You shall walk until I come again ! ”

And now he was breathing behind my ear :

“ You shall walk until I come again ! ”

And now his voice was everywhere, all round me :

“ You shall walk until I come again ! . . . ”

What if he were never to come again ? What if I must walk for ever ? . . .

.

On the third day, we had to rend our garments, strew ashes, and mourn our dead. . . . How I longed to mourn them, too, but I could not ! I could not even sleep, I could not even lie down. I had gone out hours before sunrise—I had to walk

I went towards the Kedron. The sky was overcast as it is at this moment. . . . The cock was crowing. . . . Do you hear it ? It still crows. . . . I visualised Peter as he wept, Jesus as he looked at him. . . . I longed to see the others, the sisters of Lazarus, Mary of Magdala, Joanna the wife of Chuza, the apostles—all those who had been close to him . . . perhaps some particle of his being lingered in them yet. . . . But where should I find them ? They must be hiding in caves—they were being tracked down like transgressors ! . . .

A rosy tinge crept into the darkness—look, the sky is reddening now. . . . The cock continued to crow. I crossed the bridge, and thought :

“ Suppose they are in the cave.”

But they were not there. Only, behind the cave, something dangled from a branch . . . a robe . . . a beard that drooped on to the robe . . . a head that fell limply forward . . . Judas ! Hanged by the neck ! Hanged from the tree ! . . .

Where were the Scriptures that had prophesied his agony ? In what text had he read of his death ? . . . He, too, had meant to save the world ! And, like his Master, he was now *lifted on high* ! But how differently . . . it was not for Judas to draw all men up to him. . . .

I took his body down. I dragged it into the cave. I covered it with stones. . . .

.

Where should I go now ? Perhaps I should find them near the sepulchre . . . a sepulchre where no man had

been laid before, in a garden near the place of the crosses. I would find it.

I went through the city, and took the path that leads to Golgotha. . . . But how could I bear to go thither? How could I bear to look down at the spot where the crosses had stood?

I stopped; instantly I was assailed by the million needle-pricks. . . . I walked on: and the leaden weights dragged me down. And the Voice within me, outside me, the Voice that was everywhere, whispered:

"You shall walk . . . until I come again!"

But now I caught sight of someone running down the road. It was Mary of Magdala.

"They have taken him out of the sepulchre! We know not where they have laid him!" she cried, and left me standing there, speechless. At first, I did not understand.

"Whom have they taken out of the sepulchre? What sepulchre? . . . Jesus? . . . Have they taken Jesus from the sepulchre? . . . Who has taken him? . . . Why? . . ."

I started to climb the road. Again I heard the Voice:

"Until I come again. . . . Until I come again! . . ."

Now I saw the other Mary hastening down, out of breath.

"Have they taken him from the sepulchre?" I called to her.

"Who has taken him? No one has taken him!" she replied.

"But, a minute ago, Mary of Magdala told me that. . ."

"Mary of Magdala? She and I went to the sepulchre together before sunrise. . ."

"I thought she went alone. . ."

"Suddenly, the earth began to tremble! An angel came down from Heaven. . . . I am running to tell the Eleven! . . ."

“An angel?”

“He rolled back the stone that closed the sepulchre. . . .”

“Was the sepulchre closed?”

“He sat on the stone. Ah, if you had seen him! His face shone like lightning, and his raiment was white as snow! ‘Seek ye Jesus, the crucified?’ he said. ‘He is not here. He is risen!’”

“Risen? Jesus risen? . . .”

Dizziness overcame me. I listened for the Voice within me, outside me, the Voice that was everywhere. But I heard nothing. It no longer reiterated: “*Until I come again!*” He had come again! . . . Jesus had risen, like Lazarus, but with no other Jesus to cry to him: “Come forth!” Jesus had risen alone! He had gone forth from the sepulchre! . . . An angel had descended from Heaven to announce it! And within me, around me, the Voice of its sudden silence announced:

“You will not walk until the end of the world! . . . He has returned! He has risen!”

The leaden weights were lifted from my legs. I no longer dreaded to see the place of the crosses. Jesus was alive! There were no more crosses. . . . And I ran!

At the bend of the road, at the very spot where I had recognised Baruch and Reuben, their backs bloody beneath their crosses, I met the mother of James and John, who was hastening after the other women. She told me what she had seen, and as I listened, I sought to dispel the thoughts evoked by her words:

“I had gone to the sepulchre with the two Marys to take aromatic spices . . .”

So three of them had gone? The first had said she was alone. The second had said that two of them had been present. Now it seemed there had been three. . . .

“Someone had rolled back the stone . . .”

So the sepulchre had been open ?

" . . . We went in. The Master's body was no longer there. But two shining figures . . . "

. . . Two angels ? The second Mary had only seen one !

" . . . They said to us : ' Why seek ye the living among the dead ? He is not here. Remember how he spake unto you, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and crucified, and the third day rise again ! ' "

The third day ! How had I forgotten the third day ! He had said he would rise again on the third day ! To-day was the third day—and he had risen ! He was fulfilling what he had foretold ! He would fulfil everything he had foretold !

And I ran as if all the joy in the world urged me forward !

.

Two men stood on guard before the sepulchre.

" Where is he who has risen ? " I called.

" Look for yourself ! " answered one of them surlily.

The heavy stone had been rolled aside. I stooped over the opening, as a man who is dying of thirst stoops over water. . . . Suppose I should see him there, living ! . . . White wrappings trailed on the ground. . . . Beneath the vault of the rock where the body had lain, there now lay a folded shroud. . . . I looked for Jesus . . . where was Jesus ?

The man who had spoken to me said banteringly :

" The matter is simple ! His disciples stole him away from us while we slept ! "

" You lie ! " cried the other. " The Elders have bribed you to lie ! "

" The Elders ? They sent us too late in the day ! None kept watch here the first night ! How do we know he was

laid in this sepulchre ? How do we even know whether he is dead ? . . . We know the other two are dead, they were broken on their crosses ! But he ! . . . Pilate marvelled ! . . . Does a man die after only six hours on the cross ? ”

“ You have been bribed ! You lie ! ” his companion continued to shout.

. . . Had not Jesus died on the cross ? . . . Had they taken him out of the sepulchre ? . . . I had seen the lance-thrust, I knew the appearance of death ! But after ? What did I know of what had happened after ?

I trembled as if the whole world were crumbling into chaos in my breast.

“ The angel ? ” I stammered. “ Did you see the angel descend from Heaven ? Did you see the angel roll back the stone ? ”

“ I saw the angel ! When I saw him, I fell on the ground in fear ! . . . ”

But the other had seen nothing ! Had Mary of Magdala seen the angel ? If she had seen him, why should she have said to me : “ They have taken Jesus out of the sepulchre.” And the mother of James and John had seen *two* angels ! . . . Which of the men had spoken the truth ? Which of the women should I believe ? Had all three of them been dreaming ? . . . Had not Jesus returned ? He would not return ! He would not rise again ! . . . What of his promises ? What of the Kingdom ? . . . And what of me ? Would I walk until the end of the world ? And if the end of the world were never to come ? Would I walk until eternity ? . . .

Now John and Peter drew near.

“ Women’s chatter ! ” said Peter.

But John ran faster. He was the first to look in. Peter bent down, and afterwards entered the sepulchre. John followed him. They both came out together.

“What can have happened?” they asked each other

Had they forgotten that Jesus had said: “On the third day, the Son of Man will rise again?” They were filled with amazement—did they not believe in the resurrection? . . . How, then, could I believe in it?

.

I followed them. They walked along in silence, one behind the other, keeping close to the walls as if they went by stealth. They paused in narrow alleys, retraced their steps and again hastened on . . . finally they went into that house where I had served the last supper. I went in behind them.

The nine were there, bare-footed, crouched in the ashes. They rent their garments, and uttered lamentations. They beat their heads against the stones. The mother of Jesus was in the room, as were the other women and Dina. How had Dina found them? . . .

Mary of Magdala was repeating her story. But now it was a different story! She had seen two angels in shining white apparel in the sepulchre, at the spot where the body had lain, one angel at the head, one at the foot. They had said to her: “Woman, why weepest thou?”—“They have taken my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.” Then Jesus himself had appeared—she had seen him! At first, she had not recognised him and had taken him to be the gardener. “Whom seekest thou?” he had asked. He had used the Hebrew form of her name—Miriam—and had said: “Touch me not . . . I am not yet ascended unto my Father . . . I ascend unto my Father and your Father—and to my God and your God!”

She had seen him! She had heard him! Then why should I, too, not see him, and hear him?

“Yes! The tomb was empty!” said Peter stupidly.

"He told us he would go into Galilee!" said John. "But why should we seek him in Galilee if he has ascended into Heaven?"

But the others were not even listening. They no longer believed in Jesus, in anything. . . . I looked at them as though they were the figments of a dream. . . . Shuddering, they crouched in the ashes!

.

How I longed to weep with them! But I could not! The needles were again tingling through my bones! I had to walk! I walked!

That day I walked through Lifta, and crossed the Shorek. At Kolonieh I tried to stop. But, after a little, I walked on.

"When I lay on my pallet at Uncle Simeon's," I thought, "how fervently I longed to walk!" But now! . . . Ah, why has he changed his blessing into a curse? 'Take up thy bed, and walk!' he said. He healed me of paralysis—will he heal me of perpetual motion? . . . Could I carry his cross when I saw those other two crosses! . . ."

And now I again heard the Voice that reiterated:

"Until I come again! . . . Until I come again! . . ."

"He cannot come back!" I told myself. "Nothing can re-create the body from the dissolution of death! . . . Yet did he not raise the widow's son at Nain, and Jairus' daughter at Capernaum? Has it not been told? And was not I azarus dead? He reeked of decay! . . . Yet I saw him with my own eyes when, after four days, he came forth living from the tomb! Did not Jesus possess the power to raise Lazarus? Does he not, after his death, possess the power that compels me to walk? Then can he not rise and come forth out of his own death?"

Night had long fallen. But through the luminous

darkness I could see the hills above Emmaus. . . . Two pilgrims were going down towards Jerusalem. They were disciples—Cleophas and Nathaniel. . . . You already know what they told me.

As they were on their way to Emmaus, a stranger had approached them and they had continued on their way together. They had talked sorrowfully of Jesus betrayed and crucified—in him they had hoped to find the redeemer of Israel, and he had come to a wretched end. But the stranger had said to them : “ O slow of heart, ought he not to have suffered these things to enter in his glory ? ” and beginning at Moses, and ending with Daniel and Malachi, had cited all the prophecies that Jesus had fulfilled. Had they not pierced his hands and feet, as the Psalmist had foretold ? Had they not divided his garments, drawn lots for his tunic ? Was he not the Lamb of God, the only one of the three who had been crucified whose bones had not been broken, because the bones of the Paschal lamb must not be broken ? When he had spoken of the Sign of Jonah, who remained for three days in the belly of the whale and came forth, had he not signified that he would remain for three days in the bowels of the earth and then come forth ? And when he had said : “ I will rebuild this Temple in three days,” had he not meant that it was the temple of his body he would rebuild ? . . .

Who was this unknown man who knew so many things. . . . When they had reached the village, he had eaten with them. He had taken the bread, broken it, and given it to them.

“ And then,” said Cleophas, “ our eyes were suddenly opened. . . . ”

It was the Master !

“ . . . But as soon as we knew him . . . even as we looked at him, he vanished from our sight ! ”

How strange a thing was this : their eyes had seen him and, suddenly, they saw him not !

“ Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened the Scriptures to us ? ” said Nathaniel. “ And now we are going immediately to the city to tell the apostles.”

They had seen him, as Mary Magdalene had seen him ! I accompanied them, and thought, as I walked along :

“ Cleophas is not a woman, nor is Nathaniel ! What they have seen, they have seen ! And both of them agree about what they have seen ! Perhaps I too will see him ! And if I see him . . . ! ”

When we reached the city, Peter too had seen him !

Ah, if only I had been able to stay with them, if only I had not been forced to leave them ! I would have been there when he returned ! I learnt of it the next day ; that same evening, scarcely a moment after I had gone, he had again appeared ! . . . Though every door was closed, he had entered. He had said : “ Peace be unto you ! ” Terror-stricken, they had supposed it was a spirit, but he had reproached them for their troubled hearts, and had shown them his hands and feet : “ Handle me and see—it is I myself ! Has a spirit flesh and bones ? ” . . . But so great was their joy that they had stood there dumbfounded. Then he had said to them : “ Have ye any meat ? ” and had taken a piece of broiled fish, and eaten it before them !

Some of them had asked him : “ Wilt thou at this time restore again the Kingdom of Israel ? ”

So much for their understanding ! Even after his death, his resurrection, they were still incapable, like the Zealots, of seeing anything more than the Kingdom of Israel in the promised Kingdom !

But Peter had regained confidence. He spoke of returning to his nets with his brother Andrew, and of going to await the Master in Galilee, as he had ordained. The others, too, were changed. They wept no longer, for they had seen him. Only Thomas had not been there when Jesus had appeared to them. After the death on the cross, he had again doubted, and had said :

“ Except I see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into the wound in his side, I will not believe ! ”

A week later, as I was walking round the walls, he ran towards me ! But he, too, was utterly changed—so changed that at first I did not recognise him !

“ I have seen ! I have seen ! ” he cried. “ The Master said to me : ‘ Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands. Reach hither thy hand, thrust it into my side. Be not faithless. Believe ! ’ ”

And Thomas, the doubter, believed ! He believed !

“ Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed,” the Master had added to him. “ Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed ! ”

But I was not blessed. I had not seen, nor had I believed. . . .

.

Why should I seek him since he had hidden himself from me ? I wandered at random along the roads. Was it at random, or was it his will ? . . . The leaden weights dragged less heavily at my limbs. Already I was beginning to grow accustomed to walking ! But the million needles pricked me more sharply than ever so that I dared not stop. I walked and walked.

“ They have seen something—so much is certain,” I thought as I walked. “ But what have they seen ? Is it a figment of their imagination ? Yet how could they all

imagine the same thing simultaneously ? They touched him. They saw him eat ! Can you handle a dream ? Do you offer food to a dream ? How strangely he lives now ! He has a body that is not like other bodies, for he passes through closed doors ! He appears and disappears ! He dwells in Heaven and on earth ! Does he dwell *in glory* on the earth ? Shall I alone on earth not see him in his glory ? ”

One night I came to a town that was familiar to me . . . those streets and squares . . . they awoke an answering chord in me . . . I came to the shop. They were all there, my uncle, my aunt, my cousins . . . no, not all ! Two were missing ! . . . Unseen, I watched them . . . they smoothed the wood, pared the leather, stitched with the coarse needles, and hammered away. . . . Aunt Sephora was lighting the lamps. . . .

And the children ! Yes, the children of Baruch and Reuben ! They had just come back from school, and stood on tiptoe to caress the *mezuzah* with their fingers.

“ What verse did you learn to-day, little ones ? ” asked Uncle Simeon.

And he explained it to them, and told them stories of Hillel.

“ When will the Messiah come ? ” asked the children.

“ Soon, little ones,” said Aunt Sephora. “ He will come . . . he will come ! . . . ”

What was the use of showing myself ? I would not have been able to stay. . . .

And I walked on and on, not knowing where I was going ! . . . Now I could sleep again. But when I slept, I dreamed ; and in my dreams, I was still walking ! I saw roads and roads and roads ! Roads paved with stones, roads full of ruts, roads of burning sand, and

roads that bristled with thorns. I saw roads that led through towns and forests, over plains and mountains. In my dream, I walked on and on. I thought I could see where the roads ended—somewhere on the sky-line, or in the depths of an abyss towards which they compelled my feet. But when I reached the bottom of the abyss, when I came to the sky-line, they began again ! Each road became another road, and that road became ten roads, and the ten roads a hundred ! They ascended, descended, turned and twisted, disappeared and reappeared ! And in my dreams, in sun or rain or wind, I walked !

One day . . . awake ! . . . I came to the banks of the lake—in Galilee ! The apostles were there. The ships were made fast, and the net, which had just been drawn up, was full of fish. Other fish were browning on a brazier. Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel, all of them called to me :

“ Did you see him ? He ate with us ! He has but this moment left us ! ”

Again the world seemed to crumble in my breast. . . .

I had been gone before he had come in Jerusalem ; and now that I had come, it was he who had gone !

“ He said to me thrice : ‘ Lovest thou me ? Feed my sheep ! . . . ’ ” Peter told me.

. . . Ah, if he had said to me : “ Lovest thou me ? ” . . .

“ We saw him on the mountain,” the others told me.

“ He promised us the Holy Ghost to give us power, and to save us. We shall speak with new tongues. We shall take up serpents, and they will not harm us. We shall drink deadly poisons, and they will not hurt us ! . . . ”

I did not ask for the Holy Ghost, for new tongues ; I did not ask that serpents should not harm me, nor

poisons hurt me ! . . . No ! I asked for nothing more than to see him for a single moment—and so cease walking for ever !

“ . . . Now do you understand what we had to believe ? ” said Thomas. “ He is the first-fruits of death. He that believes in him shall live without sin, dwell in his Kingdom, and have life everlasting ! ”

But I did not understand !

John explained : “ Yes, the Word was made flesh to dwell amongst us. We have seen his glory ! . . . ”

I did not understand !

Their eyes were alight with eagerness ! They were filled with courage to conquer the earth ! Because they had seen him resurrected, they, too, were resurrected ! They were going to resurrect the world ! And I thought :

“ Shall I alone not see him ? Will he return to all, but never to me ? ”

After that, I no longer wandered at random ; I sought him. Once more, I searched for him high and low, as I had searched for him after the death of John the Baptist when I had lost him on the banks of the Jordan.

I climbed up to the cave on Mount Arbela where I had stayed with the hermit. I passed through Bethsaida and Chorazin. I ran through all the streets of Nazareth. I came down from the heights. I crossed the Ford of Wailing. I went as far as Safed, to the source of the Jordan.

“ Why should you be the only one not to see him ? ” I thought. “ They ate and drank with him while he lived : and neither saw nor heard him. But now, because they have seen him alive, who is dead, have they understood, and made a God of him ? Why should I not understand ? Why should I not see this God ? . . . To

them, he was less alive while he lived. To me, his death would be no more than his death ! . . . ”

And I wandered on and on. I sought him. As I had sought for him living, so now I sought for him dead !

I went over each step of his last journey—Mount Tabor, Capernaum, Beth Nimrah, Bethany . . . and now it was not only at night that I dreamed. I dreamed in daylight as I walked along ! The roads I trod were indeed the roads I knew : the roads to Mount Tabor, Capernaum, Beth Nimrah, and Bethany—and yet, they were unknown, unfamiliar ! They were roads that led through towns where castanets clicked in the market-places ; towns where organs throbbed in Temples of lace-fretted stone ; towns where painted roofs shone in the rain, and wooden huts were buried under snow-drifts, and iron towers threw out beams of light ! They were roads that crossed rivers, where the ships had chimneys—mountains where rails disappeared into caverns—deserts above which men hovered in the air ! And as I walked, I said to myself :

“ Why should he be the first-fruits of death ? Was not Lazarus raised before his resurrection ? And all those prophets who came forth from their tombs, after his death, when the veil of the Temple was rent—did they not rise before he rose ? And, before his coming, did not Uncle Simeon teach me that all the righteous would share in the resurrection ? Then why should his resurrection alone be the miracle ? Why should his resurrection alone bring about the Kingdom ? ”

And, dreaming, I walked along the known, yet unknown, roads. But I was no longer alone. Multitudes walked behind me ! Multitudes walked before me ! There were Jews like myself, and Jews that bore no resemblance to me : black-haired Jews, brown-haired Jews, fair-haired Jews ; Jews in unfamiliar garments,

Jews who spoke in languages I had never heard, Jews who wept and shrieked and wailed ! And at every point along the roads, crosses sprang up, stakes flamed, whips cracked, swords dripped with blood, bullets fell like hail ! . . . And besides the Jews, there were other multitudes who moved, like the Jews, between the crosses and the stakes, beneath the whips and the swords and the bullets ! And from every cross, every stake, every whip, every sword, every bullet, the voice cried :

" Until I come again ! . . . Until I come again ! . . . "

And I said :

" Where is thy Kingdom ? In the other world ? Is it enough to believe that you are not dead, in order to live on after death ? Will none think of anything but death to escape from death after death ? While we are alive, shall we suffer those who slay to slay ? Shall we allow this world that is alive to die ? Is that what they heard ? Is that what they saw ? . . . Then it were better that I should not see, and that they see ! Let them make a God of you ! Let them make a God of a man ! If Israel gives the world this God when it is blind, what God will Israel give it when it has sight ? "

I climbed the road which comes from Bethany. And I saw the Kingdom of which our prophets dreamed : understanding mantling the earth as the waves cover the bed of the sea : justice girdling its loins, and equity its reins : the wolf dwelling with the lamb, and the leopard with the kid : the spear changed to a reaping-hook, and the sword to a ploughshare ! . . .

And when I reached this spot where we are now, where the Moslems have built this tiny mosque, I was in time at last ! He was there ! And he was surrounded by five hundred, all of them disciples ! Each one of them

saw him, each one of them heard him ! He was saying :

“ John baptised with water : I baptise you with the Holy Ghost. He that believeth shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be damned ! ”

And :

“ All power is given unto me in Heaven and in earth. Be therefore my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judæa, and Samaria, to the ends of the earth. Teach all the peoples to be my disciples ! Baptise them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost ! For I am with you always, even unto the end of the world ! ”

And he was carried up to heaven in a cloud that hid him from all eyes. And they felt tongues of fire descend into their mouths. . . . And they spoke in all languages ; and in all languages, for all the peoples, they praised Jesus Christ !

That is what they saw and heard ! That is what they told me they saw and heard !

But I was there, and I alone did not hear ! I was there, and I alone did not see !

Yet, like them, I received the miracle of tongues ! And like them, from that day forth, I have spoken in every tongue. I walk through the centuries, and I walk amongst the peoples ; and in all the languages, to all the peoples, during every century, I know what Jesus would have said—the Jesus whom I myself saw and heard ! And this Jesus, my Jesus, what would he have said to-day ?

During his life, he taught : “ There is nothing from without a man that entering into him can defile him. But the things which come out of him—slander, lies,

blasphemy—these are the things which defile him.” To-day, he would teach : “ There is nothing which enters a man’s soul from without—either true or false knowledge—which can purify it. But the things which come out of his soul—justice, peace, love—these are the things which purify it ! ”

During his life-time, he said : “ Render unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar’s, and unto God the things which be God’s.” To-day he would say : “ Render unto your country those things which are your country’s, and unto man those things which are man’s ! ”

During his life-time : “ Sell all thou hast and give to the poor.” Now : “ Let there be no more poor. Let there be no more rich. Let there be nothing more to sell, nothing to take, and nothing to give ! ”

Again, during his life-time : “ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.” Now : “ That which is born of the spirit is spirit, and that which is born of iron is iron. You cannot serve two masters : The Machine and God ! For in the beginning was the spirit, and the spirit was with God, and the spirit was God. But you have hidden the spirit in the Machine, and the Machine hides God ! ”

And to the Christians he would cry :

“ What have you done with my Kingdom that I took from the Children of Israel to give to the children of the Gentiles ? In two thousand years, what have you done with it, you Christians, children of the Gentiles ? What have you done with my Jews whom I had forgiven ? What have you done with my poor in whom I incarnated myself ? What have you done with my peace for which I died ?

“ Because I said to the weak : ‘ Resist not force,’ you have crushed the weak beneath force ! Because I said to the poor : ‘ Take no thought of gold,’ you have

crushed the poor beneath the weight of gold ! Because I said to those who believed : ‘ Wait for the next world,’ you have crushed them beneath the pangs of this world !

“ One day, you will come, as the Jews once came, to knock at the Strait Gate. Again, the Master of the House shall have arisen. He will have closed the Gate. You will knock. You will say : ‘ Lord, open unto us ! ’ and now it is to you that he will reply : ‘ I know not whence ye are ! ’ Then you will say : ‘ We have set up statues of thee and built churches ; we have eaten thy body, and drunk thy blood. We have spoken, preached, and ruled in thy name. We have pillaged, burned and slaughtered in thy name ! ’ But he will reply : ‘ Your priests have prostrated me to the Beast ! Your monks have made capital out of my poverty ! Your rulers have made corpses out of my sacrifice ! Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity ! You shall be thrown into the outer darkness where there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth ! ’

“ Then you, the Jews, will again knock at the Gate, as you knocked before. You will say : ‘ The Christians have stolen thy Kingdom from us. Lord, open unto us ! ’ He will again reply to you : ‘ I know not whence ye are ! ’ You will say : ‘ We have remained faithful to thee for centuries and centuries. We have waited, amidst torture and persecution, for the true Messiah whom thou hast promised to us ! ’ He will reply : ‘ To wait is not enough ! What have you done to bring about his coming ? I scattered you amongst the people that you might be as links between them. But instead of linking them together, you have clung to their idols, shared in their luxuries, and taken part with them in their conflicts. Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity ! You shall be thrown into the outer darkness where there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth ! ’

“And if, Christians and Jews, you no longer dread the end of the world, and the vengeance of Heaven, go now in dread of the vengeance of the earth !

“Repent ye, for the hour is at hand ! It is not that hour of which I said to you : ‘ No man knoweth when it cometh ! ’ You all know when this hour will come—it will come to-morrow !

“And when I foretold that other hour, I said to you : ‘ He that is upon the house-top, let him not go into the house to take up his possessions, and he who is in the field, let him not turn back again to take up his garment. He that is in the city, let him leave the city ; and he that is in the village, let him flee into the mountain ! Two men shall be in one field ; the one shall be taken, the other left : two men shall be in one bed ; one shall be left, and the other taken ! ’

“But in that hour of which I speak, even he who has remained upon his house-top shall not escape ! Even he who has not turned back to take up his garment shall not escape ! Even he who has left the city, and he that has fled into the mountain shall not escape ! Two men shall be in the same field ; neither of them shall be left ! Two men shall be in the same bed ; both of them shall be taken ! For the war that your sins have made ready will grind your cornfields into dust ; your houses, mountains, cities, will be dust ; rich and poor, strong and weak, guilty and innocent will be dust !

“Repent ye, repent ye, Christians and Jews ! Or once again I will give my Kingdom to others ! To other Gentiles ! To the new Gentiles ! To those who think they reject me because they reject you, but who seek, although they know it not, my peace and justice and love, and are nearer to me, despite insurrection, murder, and blindness, than your rabbis, your clergy, and your Popes with all their prayers and genuflexions !

“ And these new Gentiles will make my Gospel of Forgiveness into a Gospel of Wrath ! They will cry, these new Gentiles, to your Pharisees of machine-guns, and your Sadducees of shrapnel :

“ ‘ Woe unto those who make arms, for they shall be subdued by arms !

Woe unto those who give their benediction to arms, for they shall be massacred by arms !

Woe unto those who call men to arms, for they shall be exterminated by arms !

But blessed are those who will refuse to bear arms, for they shall create the earth !

Blessed are those who will cast down their arms, for they shall give birth to the Messiah !

Blessed are those who will die for peace, for they shall see God ! ’ ”

.

The sun was rising over Jerusalem. He turned to me, gripped my hand with all his strength, and cried :

The time has come ! Arise ! Take up your courage, and walk !

He was dragging me down towards the Kedron—with his step that bestrides the universe. He climbed towards the city. He cried :

Come with me ! Lift your voice with theirs ! Let us go round the world ! Let us lift our voices to save the world :

“ Woe unto those who make arms, for they shall be subdued by arms ! . . .

Woe unto those who give their benediction to arms. . . . ”

But I would not. I dared not. I said :

"Not yet ! Later ! The world is not yet ready !"

Be ready ! The world will be ready !

I said : "What will become of peace if my country disarms ?"

He was not listening.

I groaned : "If a Jew utters such words, what will they do to the Jews ?"

He was not listening ! He cried :

Come with me ! Lift your voice with mine : "Woe unto those who call men to arms." . . .

I said imploringly : "I have a wife ! I have sons ! What will they do to my wife ? To my sons . . . and to me—what will they do to me ? . . ."

Of what account are your sons ? Of what account is your wife ? And you—what does it matter what they do to you ? Open your lips ! So that the Messiah may come, lift up your voice, and shout with me :

"Blessed are those who cast down their arms." . . .

At the gate of the city, I snatched my hand from his. I fled into the valley. . . .

And I heard his cry that echoed through the city :

"Blessed are those who die for peace, for they shall see God !"

APPENDIX

ABBREVIATIONS IN THE FOLLOWING LIST OF AUTHORITIES

Ab	Aboth.
AJ	Antiquities of the Jews by Flavius Josephus.
Ass	Assumption of Moses.
Bar	Apocalypse of Baruch.
BB	Bába Bathra.
Ber	Berakhoth.
Bez	Bezah.
BM	Bába Metsi.
Cor	Epistle to the Corinthians.
Dan	Daniel.
Deut	Deuteronomy.
Ecc	Ecclesiastes.
En	Book of Enoch.
Ex	Exodus.
Ez	Ezekiel.
Gen	Genesis.
Git	Gittin.
Hag	Hagigah.
HC	The Holy Childhood (Evangelium Infantiae).
Hul	Hullin.
Is	Isaiah.
Jeb	Jebamoth.
Jer	Jeremiah.
Jn	Saint John.
Jub	Book of Jubilees.
JW	Jewish Wars by Flavius Josephus.
Kid	Kiddushin.
Lev	Leviticus.
Lk	Saint Luke.
Mak	Makkoth.
Mal	Malachi.
Men	Menahoth.
Mich	Micah.
Mid	Midrash.
Mk	Saint Mark.
Moed	Moed Katan.
MR	Midrash Rabba.
Mt	Saint Matthew.
Num	Numbers.
Pes	Pesahim.
Pesik	Pesikta.

Ps	Psalms.
Ps Sol	Psalms of Solomon.
Rom	Epistles to the Romans.
Rosh	Rosh Hasshanah.
Sam	Samuel.
San	Sanhedrin.
Shab	Shabbath.
Sheb	Shebuoth.
Sib	Sibylline Oracles.
Taan	Taanith.
Tar	Targum.
Tol	Toledot Jeschua.
Vis	Visions of Catherine Emmerich.
Yad	Yad-Hahasakah by Maimonides.
Zech	Zechariah.
DGM	De Grandmaison, <i>Jesus Christ</i> ; 2 vols ; Paris, 1929.
Eis	Eisler, <i>Jesous Basileus</i> ; 2 vols ; Heidelberg, 1928-29.
Her	Herford, <i>Phariseanism</i> ; London, 1912.
Mtf	Montefiore, <i>Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teachings</i> ; London, 1930. Montefiore, <i>The Synoptic Gospels</i> ; 2 vols ; London, 1927.
SB	Strack & Billerbeck, <i>Kommentar zum neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash</i> ; 4 vols ; Munich, 1922-28.
Schu	Schurer, <i>Geschichte des jüdischen Volks im Zeitalter Jesu Christi</i> ; 3 vols ; Leipzig, 1890-98.
Z	Zirus, <i>Der Ewige Jude</i> ; Leipzig, 1928.

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- 8 34 Judas knew . . . Jn xviii. 2
 9 5 One of you shall betray me : Mk xiv. 18
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 9 15 This was where the three . . . betray me : Lk xxii. 45 ; Mt xxvi.
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 9 31 Picture the flaming torches . . . sword : Jn xviii. 2-10
 10 11 Put up thy sword . . . buy swords : Mt xxvi. 52 ; Lk xxii. 36 ; Jn
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 11 17 The archers . . . wept : Mk xiv. 53-72
 12 12 The affair of the standards : JW ii., ch. 9, 2-3
 14 17 Spat forth insults . . . Son of God : Mk xv. 29-32 ; Lk xxiii. 10 ;
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 20 26 Do not say . . . life everlasting : Ab ii. 4-7
 21 5 Never can an *am-haaretz* . . . bread : Ab ii. 6 ; Pes 49b ; Git 61b
 21 32 But speaks of forgiveness : Ps ciii. 3
 22 2 I say that quinsy . . . dropsy : Shab 33a
 23 6 The Messiah . . . God's designs : 1 Sam x. 1 ; Ps cv. 15 ; Ps
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 23 18 He will come soon . . . nor more blind : Is xi. 11-12 ; En x. 18 and
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 24 25 Whosoever is merciful . . . Aaron : Bez 32b ; Sifra Ex xiii.
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 20 ; Mt iii. 16-17 ; Jn i. 32-34
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- 59 21 His eyes : Lk vi. 10
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- 61 27 The army shall come . . . in Galilee : Dan ix. 27; JW ii. 9; Mal iv. 5-6; Mt xvii. 12-13; Mich v. 1; Is viii. 23; Mt iv. 15-16
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 72 11 A prophet . . . until now: Lk vii. 24-28; xvi. 16; Mt xi. 11-13
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